

THIRD-YEAR EVALUATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS/DALLAS

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT/SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATION

BOARD LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

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Under No Child Left Behind legislation of 2002, school principals shoulder the burden of school success determined by test scores of students. Challenges principals face demand school leaders possess greater knowledge and skills than administrators of the past. The need for well-trained, skilled school leaders makes it important to study the subject of school leadership training. This study examined a school leadership preparation partnership between the University of North Texas and Dallas Independent School District. Primary supporting references include work by Bottoms and O'Neill (2001) calling for the 16-member states of the Southern Regional Education Board to train a new breed of principal to meet the current demands for student achievement in public schools. This research adds to the body of knowledge of school leadership development programs, particularly those that involve cohort-based study groups and shared service partnerships between school districts and universities. Major questions investigated: 1) How did participation in the program change the involvement of administrative interns in campus-based decision-making? 2) How has participation in the program changed the ways participants perceive themselves? 3) What actions have members of the cohort group taken in their teacher-leader/administrative positions to affect student achievement? 4) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program partnership? Information was gathered from 16 of the 26 program participants through questionnaires, interviews, and document study.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A call for reform in public education has occurred over the last 2 decades. With the enactment of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation in January 2002 (PL 107–110), high-stakes accountability systems are in place in almost every state in the United States. The school principal shoulders the burden of school success, which is determined by the cumulative test scores of individual students in each school. The new challenges that principals face demand that school leaders possess greater knowledge and skills than administrators of the past (Achilles, 1994; Bottoms & O’Neill, 2001; Bradshaw & Buckner, 1994; Roueche & Baker, 1986). The national awareness of the need for well-trained, skilled school leaders makes the training of school leaders an important topic of study.

This paper describes a research study that examined a school-leadership preparation program at the University of North Texas. Chapter 1 introduces the study.

Background of the Study

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) invited higher education institutions from its 16-member states to join in the creation of a Leadership Development Network comprised of institutions that would “have an interest in working together to reshape the traditional leadership preparation program by giving greater emphasis to the knowledge and skills needed by school leaders to improve curriculum, instruction and student achievement” (Bottoms & O’Neill, 2001, p. 2).

In 2002, as a participating institution in the Network, the University of North Texas (UNT) educational administration program developed a partnership with the Dallas Independent School District (DISD) in Dallas, Texas to provide an innovative school leadership program aimed to improve schools and student achievement.

Bottoms and O'Neill (2001) cited the necessity of school improvement in a study: Schools are not less effective today. By any fair measure, their performance matches or exceeds the schools of 20 or 30 years ago. But their challenge is greater today—and far too many schools have not changed enough to meet the expectation that all students can master demanding subject matter and apply what they have learned to solve real-world problems. The reality is that school must change fundamentally. (p. 6)

The SREB initiative wanted answers for two essential questions: (a) “What do today’s successful school leaders need to know and be able to do?” and (b) “How can we prepare and develop effective school leaders?” (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001, pp. 6–7).

An answer to the first question was offered in *Preparing a New Breed of School Principals: It's Time for Action* (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001). Based on concurrent studies conducted by researchers, experts, and school principals, the authors identified traits that effective school leaders should possess, including the ability to:

1. Create a focused mission to improve student achievement and a vision of the elements of school, curriculum, and instructional practices that make higher achievement possible
2. Set high expectations for all students to learn higher-level content

3. Recognize and encourage implementation of good instructional practices that motivate and increase student achievement
4. Create a school organization where faculty and staff understand that every student counts and where every student has the support of a caring adult
5. Use data to initiate and continue improvement in school and classroom practices and student achievement
6. Keep everyone informed and focused on student achievement
7. Make parents partners in their student's education and create a structure for parent and educator collaboration
8. Understand the change process and have the leadership and facilitation skills to manage it effectively
9. Understand how adults learn and know how to advance meaningful change through quality sustained professional development that benefits students
10. Use and organize time in innovative ways to meet the goals and objectives of school improvement
11. Acquire and use resources wisely
12. Obtain support from the central office and from community and parent leaders for their school improvement agenda
13. Continuously learn and seek out colleagues who keep them abreast of new research and proven practices. (Bottoms & O'Neill, pp. 8–17)

Suggestions from experts and effective school leaders include emphasis on the knowledge and skills principals need to improve curriculum, instruction, and student

achievement. In the same study, researchers Bottoms and O'Neill (2001) offered suggestions to prepare and develop effective school leaders:

1. Local school districts tap and develop potential leaders with demonstrated knowledge of curriculum and instruction and plan quality school-leadership growth opportunities for them.
2. Open the administrative certification process to more successful educators.
3. Base professional certification on performance.
4. Make major changes in university-based leadership preparation programs.
5. Redesign university programs to provide more school-based learning.
6. Offer quality alternatives to traditional university-leadership preparation programs.
7. Refocus state leadership academies on comprehensive improvement of schools.
8. Require that to maintain leadership certification one must successfully participate in continuous learning activities that are aligned to school improvement. (pp. 18–29)

A group of institutions of higher education, with the common interest of working to reform existing leadership preparation programs, resulted in the SREB Leadership Development Network. Universities in the group redesigned their comprehensive school leadership programs based on suggestions for needed reform.

The University of North Texas educational administration program (UNT/EDAD) was selected by the SREB to participate in the Leadership Development Network. The University of North Texas program in educational administration was redesigned to match the needs of aspiring education leaders within the parameters of the DISD system.

The standards developed for the potential leaders who participated in the UNT/DISD Leadership Development Program included:

1. Support of rigorous academic standards and instructional methods that motivate and engage students
2. Creation of meaningful connections between the abstract aspects of the curriculum and real-world learning experiences
3. Creation and management of a support system that enables all students to meet high standards and motivates faculty to expect greater achievement from all students
4. Establishment of priorities for change that can be measured and managed realistically
5. Creation of a personal, caring school environment that helps students meet higher standards
6. Application of research knowledge to improve school practices
7. Use of technology for management and instructional purposes. (UNT/Dallas Public Schools Leadership Development Proposal [UNT/DPS], 2001)

The partnership between the University of North Texas and DISD called for the faculty in the educational administration program to educate school leaders to meet the stated goals. Educators participating in the program worked toward a Master of Education degree and the Texas principal certificate. All required courses were the same courses that comprised the traditional principal preparation program at the University of North Texas. Faculty members, however, realigned their courses from the traditional principal preparation program to meet the standards of both the SREB and DISD.

University of North Texas faculty members and DISD officials met and signed a memorandum of agreement that created the University of North Texas/Dallas Independent School District/Southern Regional Education Board School Leadership Program in February 2002. The agreement stated that the UNT College of Education and DISD would work together to select program participants who (a) demonstrated the ability to teach so that all children achieved at high levels, (b) demonstrated a commitment to work with others to improve their school, (c) demonstrated leadership potential, and (d) met all UNT admissions requirements, both to the Toulouse School of Graduate Studies and the educational administration program of the UNT College of Education.

Initially, more DISD teachers were interested in this program than were needed since UNT and DISD had agreed to a maximum of 30 teachers participating in the first cohort. After the large response from teachers who wanted to participate in the program, DISD officials chose 10 campuses for participation. Each campus had multiple applicants, so the makeup of the school-based team could be two to three interns working together on site-based projects to improve their particular campus. A UNT faculty member and two mentor principals interviewed each applicant using questions based on SREB's "Critical Success Factors" for school principals. Applicants were chosen in part based on successful teaching experiences in DISD.

The alliance between UNT and DISD was particularly beneficial for DISD since the training met specific needs of the urban school district. When the alliance was formed, DISD had a student population of 58.9% Hispanic and 32.9% African American, as reported in the Texas Education Agency's 2002–2003 Academic Excellence Indicator

System (AEIS). DISD officials hoped the leadership preparation program would appeal to minority candidates interested in administrative positions. Initial selection of potential program participants came from nominations of campus administrators. DISD administrators played a key role in the selection of teachers whom they believed exhibited leadership potential and skills to raise student achievement.

The 2-year Leadership Development Program began in fall 2002 with 27 teachers from 10 different DISD elementary, middle, and high schools. After one intern dropped out, 26 interns completed the program. The UNT educational administration program was designed to prepare the selected individuals for building-level leadership based on adult learning theory, knowledge of effective staff development, and investigation of school improvement and effective schools. The particular design of the Leadership Development Program differed from the existing principal preparation program in the following ways:

1. Inclusion in a cohort group. Participants in the program took all 39 credit hours together. Courses were held at a Dallas location rather than at the UNT campus in Denton, Texas. By contrast, required courses are usually attended by students from many different school districts. They may never take more than one class with the same person. Traditional students take classes at the UNT campus or at several satellite locations in cities near Denton, Texas.

2. Selection of participants. The candidates chosen to participate in the program were teacher-leaders who demonstrated leadership potential and a desire to improve their schools. The principals of their schools recommended their participation in the program. In contrast, self-selection is the usual entrance method for the UNT leadership preparation program.

3. Job-embedded, problem-based learning. Classes included SREB-developed instructional modules based on effective school leadership research. Real-world, on-the-job problems that surfaced at the workplace were addressed during the course of the instruction. The 2-year internship allowed more time than the usual one-semester internship in the traditional educational leadership program.

4. The principal serving as mentor. The school principal acted as mentor for each of their interns selected to be in the program. The intent was for the participants and principals to work together continuously to improve schools.

5. Release time during the workday. One day each week, interns were released from their usual school duties at noon to attend classes and participate in related activities.

6. Working in site-based teams. Teams composed of 2 to 3 interns from elementary, middle, and secondary DISD campuses worked together for school improvement.

7. Student assessment. Portfolio assessments were used to demonstrate the acquisition of skills and knowledge required to become effective school leaders. Texas certification requirements were a focus. School principals were encouraged to work directly with interns throughout the program so each individual's strengths and knowledge could be assessed for DISD administrative positions at the end of the 2-year program.

8. Enrichment experiences. Planned enrichment activities included attendance at national education conferences, seminars conducted by skilled speakers, and Spanish language immersion courses in Mexico when the program was completed. The DISD was

to pay for the enrichment trips. Monies to fund these activities would come from grant money DISD secured to fund the program as well as Title II funds set aside for teacher and administrator training (UNT/DPS, 2001).

This cohort model of instruction was designed by UNT to relate learning experiences in leadership and research-based information to solve field-based problems at the interns' schools. The release time for the interns was intended to better assist school-based learning for each intern. The mentoring experiences in the program were to permit more time for the principal and the intern to work together to increase and embed leadership skills.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this research is to determine whether the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program met the goals established for the program.

Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How did participation in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program change the involvement of the administrative interns in campus-based decision making?
2. How has participation in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program changed the ways the administrative interns perceive themselves?
3. What actions have the members of the cohort group taken in their teacher-leader/administrative positions to affect student achievement?
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program partnership from the viewpoint of the program participants?

Definition of Terms

Administrative interns: Teacher-leaders from different DISD campuses who were selected by their school principals to participate in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program; often referred to as “program participants.”

Cohort: A group of students who engage in a program of study in which they share classes and experiences (Yerkes, Norris, Basom, & Barnett, 1994).

Field-based learning: Knowledge learned in the university setting and applied to authentic school-related situations and problems at the participants’ schools.

Mentor principals: Building-level administrators at participating DISD schools who selected the administrative interns and acted as teachers and guides for the interns.

Problem-based learning: Student learning through simulations of authentic situations. Knowledge is structured around the situations so that students are accountable for their learning (Bridges & Hallinger, 1992).

Program sponsors: Members of the UNT College of Education educational administration program and DISD officials who designed and implemented the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program.

Release time: Once per week, interns left their campuses at noon to attend class and related activities. The DISD secured substitute teachers for the interns.

Southern Regional Education Board (SREB): Founded in 1948, the SREB works with 16 member states to connect leaders and agencies that work to improve education from prekindergarten through graduate school levels.

Teacher-leaders: Teachers such as team leaders, department chairpersons, and committee chairpersons who demonstrate leadership abilities in their schools.

UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program: The partnership between the educational administration program in the College of Education at the University of North Texas and Dallas Independent School District to provide a 2-year, innovative principal preparation program that incorporated the cohort model, field-based learning, and problem-solving methods.

Methodology

The theoretical framework for this study was the Context, Input, Process, Product (CIPP) model of program evaluation, developed in 1971 and revisited in 1980 and 1985 by Stufflebeam (Gredler, 1996). The CIPP model is composed of four evaluation areas: context, input, process, and product. The CIPP instrument allows continuous institution evaluation to measure overall status, recognize deficiencies and strengths available to correct weaknesses, and identify problems that limit the well-being of the program (Stufflebeam & Shinkfeld, 1985).

Context evaluation involved the initial planning decisions and indicated direction for improvement (Stufflebeam, 1980). Program goals, priorities, and needs were revised. Input evaluation included the structuring of decisions for approaches to change the program. Barriers and limitations that inhibited the program were identified. Implementing decisions was the third part of the CIPP framework, referred to as *process evaluation*. Program modification possibilities were sought to provide assistance to both outside sources interested in the program and staff and administrators in charge of the program. The finished product was the final evaluation area in the CIPP model. Decisions were reevaluated to judge and react to the outcomes of the program.

The study to determine whether the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program achieved its goals employed qualitative research design and methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1965; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Merriam (1988) stated the “qualitative case study is a particularly useful methodology for addressing problems in which understanding is sought in order to improve practice” (p. 32). This research study method yielded information and conclusions that can aid the program sponsors in determining the strengths and limitations of the program based on information from the first cohort involved in this leadership development program.

Limitations of the Study

Factors that limited the generalizability of this study included the following:

1. The participants in this first cohort study were previously teachers in various Dallas, Texas public schools. The characteristics, behaviors, and attitudes of these participants may not be consistent with those of other populations, especially those not teaching in urban school districts.
2. The outcomes of this study were limited to the 26 administrative interns in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program. This was not a random sample; there were no expectations that the results would be generalized beyond this sample.
3. The participation of these particular interns in this cohort group was unique. The makeup of this group may make replication of the research impossible. Findings may or may not carry over to future cohorts; rather, they may vary as other cohort groups are chosen in the future.
4. Though every effort was made to insulate the study from possible bias, the researcher acknowledges that she was securing a doctorate degree at the University of

North Texas. Although the researcher was not involved in the development and implementation of the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program, 2 members of the doctoral committee were involved in the development and implementation of the program.

Delimitations of the Study

The findings of this study were not generalizable to other studies of cohort-based leadership training groups at all universities. The relevancy of this study was limited to the UNT/DISD/SREB program and the particular individuals involved in the cohort group.

Analysis was limited to the participants of the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program. The organization, scope of program requirements, and number of cohort members may vary from one university to another. Findings could have differed if a larger number of students had been included in the program.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it provided an evaluation of the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program after the completion of the first cohort group. This study helped UNT program sponsors determine the strengths and weaknesses of their partnership program with DISD. The problems revealed through this study provided university program coordinators and DISD officials information that might be utilized to make changes in the program. This study also helped UNT program sponsors decide whether or not to continue with additional cohorts. This study provided

DISD personnel with insight into the probable success of a principal preparation program for future use in the school district.

The review of related literature revealed the majority of evaluation studies conducted on other leadership development programs were done by university faculty members and program sponsors involved in the development and implementation of the programs at the universities where they worked. Those studies produced valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the principal preparation programs but were carried out by partisan researchers. Many of these partisan researchers suggested further study of reformed leadership development preparation programs be completed by unbiased, nonpartisan investigators, such as this researcher. This study is built on a prior study done by Newman (2004). Both studies add to the body of research on reformed leadership development preparation programs because the researchers were unbiased graduate students with no ties to the program or vested interest in the success of the program.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 introduces the study and provides background information for understanding the origin and impetus of the program. The definitions of terms, methodology, limitations, and delimitations of the study are explained.

The stated problem was to determine whether the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program met the goals established for the program. Four questions were used to study the administrative training program. The study was significant for the evaluation it provided for the ongoing UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program.

Chapter 2 reviews pertinent literature. Topics include the need for reform of educational administration programs as principal leaders are trained. Components that made up other redesigned educational administration preparation programs, as well as learning theory in adult cohort group learning situations, are cited. The active role of the academic leader and the critical part he or she held in the learning community is explored. Research on the influence the administrator had on student achievement is an important part of this chapter. Components of other leadership preparation programs, as well as strengths and weaknesses of other preparation programs, are included in this chapter.

The research design and participant selection criteria are included in chapter 3: Methodology. The plan for instrumentation, and collection and analysis of data, are presented in this chapter.

Chapter 4 focuses on the findings. The review of the study, purposes, and methodology are explained. The responses are analyzed and an examination and summary of the findings are presented.

Chapter 5 further explains and interprets the research findings, implications, and conclusions, and offers recommendations for future study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of the related literature for this assessment of the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program revealed several areas that impacted this study: (a) the CIPP model of evaluation, (b) the need for reform of educational administration preparation programs, (c) effective principal leaders, (d) innovative educational administration preparation programs, (e) adult learning theory in cohort groups, (f) academic administrative leadership and learning communities, (g) the administrator's influence on student achievement, (h) components of other cohort-styled leadership preparation programs, (i) strengths and weaknesses of administration preparation programs, and (j) other studies of the UNT/DISD/SREB program. An evaluation model to determine the effectiveness of the program is the Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) model. This model is explained in the following section of the chapter.

The CIPP Model of Evaluation

The CIPP model is a comprehensive framework for guiding evaluations of programs and institutions. Context evaluation is likened to planning goals and is focused on assessing needs, identifying problems, and opportunities to define goals and establishing priorities for the program. Input evaluation concerns plans to carry out the values of the program or institution through assessment of alternative approaches to completion of a program while noting action plans designed to meet the needs and goals of the program. Process evaluation examines the actions taken to implement the program,

while product evaluation focuses on outcomes. Process evaluation assesses implementation of plans to carry out activities to help administrators of the program judge performance and interpret outcomes of the program. Product evaluation identifies and assesses outcomes to gauge the success of meeting the targeted needs and to assess the overall quality of the program. Program evaluation is the process of reporting, describing, and judging information to guide decision making in order to increase understanding of the program. The CIPP framework requires numerous perspectives and uses an assortment of methods to evaluate and interpret information. Methods used in CIPP evaluations include, but are not limited to, surveys, literature reviews, document reviews, case studies, and interviews with stakeholders.

Using the CIPP model, the program evaluator generates and analyzes input, process, and product data to determine the success of the program. The resulting analysis is used to decide whether important needs are addressed, the program design has been competently followed, modifications have been made as needed, and whether the efforts of the program are successful. The focus of the CIPP model is improvement through decisions to repeat, modify, or expand different areas of the program. The CIPP model is a retrospective approach, using reflection by various individuals, to help assess the quality of the program. The CIPP framework is a values-oriented and objective model of evaluation (Stufflebeam, 2003).

Based on the research methods mentioned, the final evaluation usually consists of all four types of evaluation, context, input, process, and product to describe the program and judge its overall quality. By using the CIPP evaluation model, key decisions concerning the retention, expansion, or elimination of projects can be made. The CIPP

evaluation model assists in reporting merit and significance of a program to various stakeholders. The most important purpose of the CIPP model is improvement and accountability of a program.

The Need for Reform of Educational Administration Preparation Programs

Education is under intense scrutiny and debate. Beginning with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, reported by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1987), reform was deemed a necessity. Concern by business people, politicians, and education leaders was expressed as the shortcomings of America's public education system were exposed. *A Nation at Risk* touted the opinion that America's schools were mediocre and would result in jeopardizing the United States work force (Cuban, 2001; Jacobson, 1996). The report emphasized necessary school reform to improve the quality of America's schools and raise student achievement (Petrie, 1990).

Central to school reform is the issue of improved school leadership. Without the assistance of highly qualified school administrators, significant reform is unlikely (American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, 1988; Jacobson, 1996). Forty years ago, Gross and Herriott (1965) performed an empirical study to demonstrate that the school principal's leadership behaviors were key factors that influenced student learning. Since the 1980s, some efforts have been undertaken to define the knowledge base and to create standards in administrator preparation programs. The organizations involved were the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) as well as the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), which identified proficiencies for school leaders (Jackson & Kelley, 2002).

Doing the right things for students is what educators should be about—helping students to learn and to achieve. Though leadership is researched and discussed, there are no experimental studies that show a causal effect between leadership performance and improvement in student achievement outcomes (Laboratory, 2005).

The findings of Jacobson (1996) and Gross and Herriott (1965) showed effective principals offered teachers constructive feedback, showed genuine interest in improving teaching and learning, helped increase teacher confidence related to improving student performance, and made teachers' meetings a forum for rich discussion about school improvement.

Griffiths, Stout, and Forsyth (1988) argued for the importance of the school administrator:

The evolution of reforms over the past few years has progressed from cosmetic changes in course requirements to radical restructuring of the school environment. The new roles envisioned for teachers in reports of both the Holmes Group and the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession draw education into a broader field of management research from which it has been isolated for too long. At the same time, these reports identify the unique setting of the school workplace, envisioning how teachers could respond to greater autonomy and professionalism. Yet, the reforms cannot be successful without strong, well-reasoned leadership from principals and superintendents. (p. 6)

A firsthand version concerning the crises of the role of the school principal was provided by Lolli Haws, a public school principal:

Principals must handle discipline, [individual education plans], enrollment, ordering and purchasing, hiring and evaluating teachers, building maintenance, the needs of parents. . . . Then we're also supposed to be instructional leaders totally familiar with and expert in leading discussions about curriculum and teaching practices. (Hopkins, 2003, p. 1)

Copland (2004) stated,

What history tells us is that the traditional hierarchical model of school leadership, in which identified leaders in positions of formal authority make critical improvement decisions and then seek, through various strategies, to promote adherence to those decisions among those who occupy the rungs on the ladder below, has failed to adequately answer the repeated calls for sweeping educational improvements across American schools. While one can locate outposts of excellence where maverick principals or superintendents have resurrected dying schools or districts through these types of strategies, such efforts are recognizable only because they are the exception not the rule. (p. 377)

A 1997 study prepared for the American Association of Community Colleges (1997) identified existing institutional practices that were most effective for adult learners in North American universities. The study recommended the creation of an environment of institutional practice driven by adult-centered learning and sensitivity to the needs of the learner. By modifying program and course requirements, maintaining flexible administrative and instructional structures, and by choosing convenient delivery times and places, programs ensured that educational experiences responded to the goals and interests of students.

In a study reported by O'Banion (1997), six adult learning principles applied for learning to take place:

1. Creates substantive change in individual learners
2. Engages learners as full partners in the learning process, with learners assuming primary responsibility for their own choices
3. Creates and offers as many options for learning as possible
4. Assists learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities
5. Defines the roles of learning facilitators by the needs of the learners
6. Learning facilitators succeed only when improved and expanded learning can be documented for learners. (pp. 48-61)

Effective Principal Leaders

Leaders of educators can transition from this creative learning experience to participate actively in the role of an effective leader intent on improving schools. Suggestions to improve schools include hiring better teachers and improving the skills of teachers on staff (Whitaker, 2003). Whitaker noted three key differences between more effective and less effective principals. Effective principals viewed themselves as responsible for all aspects of their schools. A 1997 study by the same author supported findings that effective principals knew that they were responsible for implementing positive changes in their schools. The difference between average and great principals was in their personal expectations.

A recommendation reported by Whitaker (2003) was praising staff for jobs well done. Principals should make an effort to be inclusive and generous in recognizing

others. Focusing on positives provides more drive and energy to get through less positive times.

If everyone in a school is treated with respect and dignity, you may still have nothing special. However, if everyone in a school is not treated with respect and dignity, you will never have anything special. Of that, I am sure. (p. 26)

Whitaker added:

We are very fortunate to work in education; sometimes we just forget how blessed we are. By consistently filtering out the negatives that don't matter and sharing a positive attitude, we can create a much more successful school. Consciously or unconsciously, we decide the tone of our school. (p. 33)

In a study that examined differences between more effective and less effective principals, Fiore (1999) determined that one significant variation between more effective and less effective principals was that the very best leaders ignore minor errors.

Whitaker (2003) also admonished principals to take care of their best teachers:

Great principals consistently pay attention to the needs of all their staff members, but they are particularly sensitive to the needs of their best teachers. Though these high achievers may sometimes demand more time and effort than other staff members in their quest for excellence, the rewards are immense. Conversely, high achievers are among the first to leave when they do not feel valued and important. We might think our grippers will be the first to go, but they seldom have other places that want them. Our best staff members can succeed anywhere, doing just about anything. If we do not take care of them, someone else will—and we will have squandered our most valuable resource. (p. 87)

The principal and teachers, working in harmony for student achievement, should foster an environment of students that care and care deeply. Whitaker (2003) wrote that

The students care about the curriculum. They care about learning; they care about the teacher, and they care about each other. Once it is cool to care, anything becomes possible. Treating everyone with respect and dignity; always taking a positive approach; teaching teachers how to treat students; expecting loyalty to students; understanding that what matters is people, not programs; hiring great teachers; making every decision based on the best people—each of these helps create an environment where it is cool to care. . . . Once we achieve that, anything is possible. Until we achieve that, any obstacle can seem insurmountable. (p. 90)

During the last quarter century, initiatives to reform the American educational system emerged in response to economic, political, and social environments that involved the welfare of students. The backing of principals was critical in empowering teachers to become leaders. Principals were encouraged to examine their understanding of their leadership role, to build interpersonal relationships with teachers, and support effective teacher leadership (Murphy, 2005).

Kahrs (1996) stated: “Any teacher will be reluctant to take on a leadership role without being comfortable with the level of trust received from the school administration” (p. 10). Another researcher, Barth (1988) noted: “Perhaps the most important item on a list of characteristics of effective principals, then, is the capacity to relinquish, so that the latent, creative powers of teachers can be released” (p. 640).

Principals nurture teacher leadership by actively identifying teacher-leaders, by matching them with leadership opportunities, and by encouraging them to accept

leadership opportunities. The principal has primary responsibility for developing the leadership skills of teacher-leaders. Three components of this responsibility merit special notice: (a) modeling leadership strategies and skills that teacher-leaders can use, (b) participating in training activities designed for teacher-leaders, and (c) coaching and mentoring around the elements of effective leadership (Murphy, 2005, p. 137).

Key functions the principal can engage in to promote teacher leadership are important and varied: (a) crafting a vision and specifying expectations for teacher leadership in the school, (b) identifying and selecting teacher-leaders for leadership opportunities, (c) providing support, (d) developing skills, and (e) managing the process within the school setting (Murphy, 2005).

The development of teacher-leaders is an important component of principal training. The National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEE), a commission sponsored by the University Council of Educational Administration (UCEA), issued reports in 1987 to bring attention to the needs and concerns of preparation programs in the United States (Griffiths et al., 1988). The NCEE examined the quality of educational administration preparation programs. The NCEE (1987) report highlighted 10 major deficiencies in the development of school leaders:

1. A lack of a definition of good educational leadership
2. A lack of leader recruitment programs in the school
3. A lack of collaboration between school districts and universities
4. A discouraging lack of minorities and women in the field
5. A lack of systematic professional development for school administrators

6. A lack of quality candidates for preparation programs
7. A lack of preparation programs relevant to the job demands of school administrators
8. A lack of sequence, modern content, and clinical experiences in the preparation programs
9. A lack of licensure systems that promote excellence
10. A lack of a national sense of cooperation in preparing school leaders. (p. xiv)

Other researchers expressed similar concerns about the quality and intensity of administrator preparation programs (Murphy, 2002). After the NCEE's 1987 report, programs were reviewed in an attempt to respond to the outlined deficiencies (Jackson & Kelley, 2002).

In a national survey of school administrators in the United States, 51% rated their training as either fair or poor. Forty-six percent of the administrators stated that the requirements of their preparation programs were not rigorous enough to ensure they could meet the demands of their jobs. Only 7% viewed their preparation program as the most beneficial training they had for the job. Sixty-one percent of the respondents thought their on-the-job training was the most beneficial part of their preparation (Heller, Conway, & Jacobson, 1988). Practitioners continue to look to university preparation programs to prepare them adequately for administrative positions.

Educational administration practitioners are somewhat skeptical of potential changes in university-leadership preparation programs because of the reluctance of educational administration departments to undertake reform. In the past, reform meant

only slight changes in the course content of the traditional educational administration preparation programs (Bjork, 1995).

Evidence suggests that educators behave in ways that preserve the current system of education that accelerates the differences in the cognitive trends among subpopulations of children in schools (Andrews, 1990). Andrews took the position that principal preparation programs should prepare graduates to face the demands of a rapidly changing society. He suggested that universities had an ethical obligation to ensure quality practitioners were placed in schools. Such leaders should act as facilitators of change and school improvement, and not as custodians of practices of the past. Murphy (2002) named the key concepts visible in the profession: (a) school improvement, (b) democratic community, and (c) social justice. He suggested that these concepts could potentially re-culture school administrations.

Murphy (2002) also sent a warning to university professors as they attempted to teach the aspiring administrator:

Keeping the spotlight focused on academic knowledge also leads to . . . the belief that better theories will be the savior of administrative practice. . . . The problem is that the development of better, or more refined, or more elegant theories in and of itself will have almost no impact on the practice of school administration. . . . Worse, this work often reinforces the centrality of the university, makes knowledge an end rather than a means for improvement . . . [and] diverts energy from other much more needed work. . . . Others have discovered that the schools are administered in ways such that educational goals are undermined and learning is hindered, especially for lower ability students. Still others have built a fairly

strong case over the past 70 years that the profession has drawn energy almost exclusively from the taproot of management and the ideology of corporate America. The point . . . is not to dismiss knowledge as unimportant. Scientific inquiry, scholarly insights, and craft knowledge will offer useful substance in the process of reculturing school administration. (pp. 180–182)

Murphy (2002) suggests the administrative attribute of social justice is closely related to being a “moral steward,” meaning the administrator possesses beliefs and values anchored in issues of justice, community, and schools that function for all children and youth. School administrators should view their tasks as missions rather than jobs. In their roles as leaders, they should create a moral order between leaders and followers for shared values and beliefs. It means creating an ethical school while meeting the “moral imperative to provide real learning opportunities to the whole of the student population” (Osin, 1996, p. 621).

Murphy’s suggestion of school improvement is personified in the principal’s role as educator. He maintains that a shift is needed by school and district administrators exercising intellectual leadership from that of head teacher to that of head learner.

The administrator acting as community builder occurs in three venues: (a) with parents and members of the school environment, (b) with communities of learning fostered among professional staff, and (c) by the establishment of personalized learning environments for students. School administrators should encourage others to be leaders. They should lead by empowering, rather than by controlling, others. Empowering leadership is based on dialogue and cooperation, with as much heart as head in the style

of leading. According to Murphy (2002), “It is grounded more on modeling and clarifying values and beliefs than on telling people what to do” (p. 188).

In cooperation with the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), and the National Association of School Boards (NASB), the University Council for Educational Administration designed performance-based standards for the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education’s (NCATE) review of educational leadership programs. The standards, officially adopted by the NCATE in spring 2002, were aligned with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) to provide national guidelines for administrative practices for the preparation of principals, superintendents, curriculum directors, and supervisors (NPBEA, 2002). These standards required that candidates who completed the educational leadership program have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by:

1. Facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a school or district vision of learning supported by the school community
2. Promoting a positive school culture, providing an effective instructional program while applying best practices to student learning, and designing comprehensive professional growth plans for the staff
3. Managing the organization, operations, and resources in a way that promotes a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment

4. Collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources
5. Acting with integrity, fairness, and ethics
6. Understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context
7. Serving internships that provide opportunities for candidates to apply knowledge and practice and develop skills through substantial, sustained, standards-based work in real settings that are planned and guided by the educational institution and school district personnel for graduate credit. (NPBEA, 2002, pp. 1–8)

The approaches outlined to accomplish those goals successfully were evident in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program design referred to in chapter 1 of this dissertation:

1. Problem-based learning as interns “learn teamwork, administrative and project development skills, and problem solving” (Hart & Pounder, 1999, p. 10).
 2. The use of cohort groups to develop strong social and interpersonal relationships, increase contact with faculty members, integrate into the university, obtain clear program structure and course sequencing, complete the administrative training program, have greater cohesiveness, and develop a professional network.
- However, disadvantages include tension, adversarial relationships that develop, uneven power relationships, and the influence of dominant members (Barnett & Muse, 1993; Saltiel, 2001). A 1995 study by the Center for the Study of

Preparation Programs found that “half of the UCEA units used cohorts at the master’s level and 80% used them at the doctoral level” (McCarthy, 1999, p. 10).

3. Collaborative partnerships. A partnership between the University of North Texas and DISD resulted in the design of a preparation program for potential educational leaders.

4. Field experiences to provide core-learning experiences in observing, participating in, and dissecting processes in addressing problems and managing organizations. Field experiences support what is learned in the classroom.

The only approach not cited in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program, but a part of the approaches mentioned in the NPBEA standards, was technology using online courses for administrators. Some universities offer online courses as a part of required training for educational coursework. There is growing evidence that some universities had been proactively creating innovative educational leadership preparation programs during the past 15 years (Copland, 2001; Milstein, 1993; Murphy, 1993a; 1993b; Young, Peterson, & Short, 2001). This evidence is examined in the next section.

Innovative Educational Administration Preparation Programs

During the past 15 years, institutions of higher learning were under pressure to devise and promote graduate courses geared towards adult learners. Graduate program planners redesigned programs to offer flexibility based on each student’s needs and experiences (Nesbit, 2001).

Common to most revised educational administrator preparation programs was a clear vision that determined programmatic decisions and provided students with

opportunities to connect their knowledge base to well-designed field experiences into the program.

Most redesigned administrator preparation programs use a variety of methods to help students transfer their theoretical knowledge to authentic experiences in educational leadership. Relevant features of successful programs include (a) theory-to-practice, (b) improved field-based experiences, (c) problem-based learning, (d) cohort grouping, (e) internships, (f) recruitment and selection of program participants, and (g) mentoring (Heller et al., 1988; Mulkeen & Tetenbaum, 1990; NPBEA, 2002; Playko, 1992; Schmuck, 1993). The following paragraphs briefly explain these practices.

Theory-to-practice begins with strategies, methods, and theories deemed to be successful in a given situation. Findings from testing, assessment, and research are then used to put knowledge into practice. The training provided in the program is useful because research is emphasized to judge the merits of educational reform. Connections are made with others trained in researching educational issues.

Field-based experiences involve developing performance assessment tasks. There is a guiding framework for the project and project design that is followed by teaching and learning experiences for project leaders and program participants.

Problem-based learning is used when program participants decide on a real-world problem to solve and, through research and practice, arrive at an acceptable and workable solution. Problem-based learning is a basis for study by individuals, or a small group, who work to arrive at a satisfactory solution.

Cohort grouping facilitates a group of participants through a particular course of study, from beginning to end, which allows them to share experiences while working

together. Cohort groups allow for individualized learning opportunities as well as collaborative engagement with fellow members.

Internships consist of supervised, on-the-job training efforts. A university professor, as well as a supervisor in the field, usually oversees the program. Recruitment and selection of program participants is accomplished through a variety of means, including interviews, questionnaires, grade point average, leadership capabilities, and work ethic as determined by a supervisor.

Mentoring is usually done by a supervisor in the field. Experiences and encouragement are important during an internship. Successful mentoring arrangements lead to competence, retention, and improved student achievement. Mentoring enhances professional and personal competence and is used as a means of transmitting the culture of the educational environment.

Adult learners who work in small groups do not always experience learning. In a cohort-styled classroom, learning should flow from common goals, mutuality, and interdependence. Learning is often perceived as an individual experience, with each person responsible for his or her learning. In this scenario, learners generally regard themselves as passive recipients to the learning process, as information is given to them by the experts; that is, their teachers or professors.

To facilitate understanding between adult learners in educational programs, group members could talk in pairs or small groups about previous group experiences. They might discuss different groups to which they belong, and what they like and what they dislike about the groups. By focusing on the groups that work well and those that do not, specific examples of individual and group behaviors can be discussed. In this way,

learners are able to become more comfortable with each other while also reviewing effective group processes. Lists could be made of behaviors that detract from group effectiveness, as well as those behaviors that are assets to group dynamics (Courtney, 1998).

It is generally understood that changing the membership of a group can cause the group members to regress to earlier periods of group development. This may complicate the nature of the cohort program and set up the students for dealing with issues they had previously worked through.

Principal preparation programs should provide opportunities for students to work collaboratively with practicing principals on real school issues (Gideon, 2000). Field-based learning experiences can be a meaningful part in preparing tomorrow's leaders. Partnerships between students and principals allow for rich learning possibilities. A commitment to school improvement through student achievement may be the powerful result of collaboration between the student-in-training and the principal.

Adult Learning Theory in Cohort Groups

Within the context of adult learning, cohort-based learning groups appear to provide a supportive process for learning. A cohort can be defined as a group of people who move together from the beginning to the end of a program of study and who develop community and support by experiencing similar stimuli, material, and challenges (Hanley, 1999). The underlying philosophy of a cohort is that learners are empowered to share ownership for their academic development. Cohort groups provide students with a feeling of inclusiveness. They also promote collaboration and enhance academic

performance. Post-cohort involvement usually is a product of the contact members experience during their collaborative studies (Brooks, 1998).

Successful cohort-based learning leads to improved student retention. In order for a cohort to be successful, adult students become acquainted with each other to develop beneficial working relationships (Lawrence, 2000). Program coherence, the motivation of students, and the connection of coursework towards completion of a degree contribute to student retention. Narrowing the gap between academia and social behaviors seems to be the key to student persistence with their studies (Tinto, 1998).

The review of literature that follows shows that a cohort-based program framework focused on success in learning can be achieved within a group. Student academic success and retention in the program can significantly increase (Fenning, 2004).

According to Potthoff, Dinsmor, and Moore (2001), there are three types of cohorts: (a) closed, where students take all coursework together and no other students are allowed to join; (b) open, where students may complete courses outside the cohort; and (c) fluid, where students can drop or join at any time. These structures allow adult participants to balance family and career responsibilities. In their research, Wlodkowski and Westover (1999) found cohort-based learning to be a valuable, effective process. Connor and Killner (2001) found members of a cohort were motivated to learn through a feeling of inclusion within the learning group. Members of the group developed a positive attitude toward the subject matter, made learning meaningful to themselves and others, and were able to demonstrate competencies in differing ways. Important to the cohort method of group instruction is the confidence members gain through emotional

and educational support that results in increased professional behavior (Kelly, 1995). Components that influence learning include student capability, quality of instruction, personal motivation, and emotional well being (Witte & James, 1998). There are, however, several negative factors related to cohort groups.

Students may become competitive or might attempt to obtain control of the group. If this occurs, course objectives and learning outcomes can be shortchanged. Instructors might need to deal with classroom politics. Some studies show that faculty members assume the role of supporting students in their academic efforts, as well as handling concerns outside the classroom (Sapon-Shevin, 2001).

The selection of teachers to form a cohort group makes sense from a statistical view. As teachers who have earned college degrees, educators are in a group of professionals who are the most active learners as adults. As young people who advance furthest in formal educational systems, they continue as the most active learners in adulthood (Cross, 1992).

Cross (1992) used a “chain of response” model—a seven-stage process that explained a person’s participation in learning activities. She believed a person’s learning selections were not single acts but the result of several responses based on the position of the individual in his/her environment. The elements were: (a) self-evaluation, (b) attitudes about education, (c) the importance of goals and the expectations that these will be met, (d) life transitions, (e) opportunities and barriers, (f) information on educational opportunities, and (g) the decision to participate. Cross’s model emphasized the interaction between various elements in a person’s life decisions.

Lester (2005) interviewed Eleanor Drago-Severson, a lecturer at Harvard University's School of Education, on the subject of adults developing "ways of knowing" in preparation for their work in the 21st century. Drago-Severson cited the constructive-developmental theory to understand how a group of adult learners makes sense of their learning experiences and their lives. Constructive-developmental theory, with its emphasis on epistemology and cognitive complexity, explicitly linked learning and developmental growth. The theory offered promising directions for student evaluation in higher education. According to Drago-Severson (2005), research conducted by Harvard University's Adult Development Team for the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy:

[Cohort group learning] illustrates not only how adult developmental theory can bridge to teaching and learning practices aimed at supporting adults' processes of transformational learning . . . but it also shows the possibilities and promise of employing developmental principles in our efforts to create more optimal learning environments for adults. (p. 3)

Linkages to learners' workplaces and real-life experiences, both personal and professional, supported and challenged a variety of learners with different ways of knowing. These linkages enabled transfers of learning to take place. University professors created opportunities for program participants to strengthen their existing knowledge about how developmental theory could improve teaching practices, curriculum development, and their understanding of diverse ways learners make sense of their experiences.

An important research finding was the importance of cohort and collaborative learning in adult learning. The tightly knit cohort, with a common purpose, is important in supporting skill development and transformational learning. Studies suggest close connections to a group are less important for adults than for adolescents; however, the interpersonal relationships adults develop in a cohort make a critical difference to academic learning, emotional and psychological well-being, and one's ability to broaden perspectives. The research by the Harvard team did not suggest that any particular cohort design is favored over another. The research claimed that a variety of ways of being supported and challenged might be more important to success than a particular structure of entry and exit in a program.

Another learning theory at work in cohort groups was experiential learning. It makes learning more relevant because it enables students to apply what they are learning. Kolb (1984) defined experiential learning as “the process of learning from experiences that shape and actualize development potentialities” (p. 133). Learning through experience and building on experience are valued and respected forms of pedagogy. Internships, work-study assignments, and cooperative education agreements make learning more meaningful while strengthening connections between education, work, and personal development. The psychological/cognitive approach to adult development shows that people reach more complex, integrated levels of development by active involvement with their environment (Murphy, 2001).

Vygotsky (1978) supported the contextual approach to development, believing that people are not separated from the contexts in which they live but are a part of them. When students are empowered by educational experiences, they develop the ability,

motivation, and confidence to succeed academically through effective participation in instruction due to their cultural identities.

Participation in instruction is sometimes difficult for adult learners who have active lives off campus. Many times the only contact students have at college is with other students within the classroom or a program. Research findings suggest, for returning adult students, classroom experiences, such as discussions or projects, are better predictors of academic interest than out-of-class experiences (Terenzini, Springer, & Pascarella, 1993).

The design of cohort groups offer ways to provide connectedness among students that shows best results in academic achievement. This design proves profitable for students, particularly for those in higher education classes in which closed cohort groups are in greater use (Yerkes, Basom, Norris, & Barnett, 1995). Studies of student involvement inside classrooms found that the group of students creates either an accepting atmosphere or an uncaring atmosphere. A supportive atmosphere is as important as the individual traits and behaviors of the students and faculties (Fassinger, 1995).

Studies of students in cohort groups show that cohorts are effective in helping shape interactions within and outside of the classrooms. Students support and motivate one another to complete a program or a degree (Norris, 1994). In a comparative study of cohort versus noncohort students at three sites, Reynolds (1995) established that members of cohort groups experienced greater interaction, both in and out of the classroom. Reynolds also found greater cohesiveness of students in cohort-based programs than in individuals who studied for similar degrees at the same institutions. Other findings

showed that adult students learned best when they influenced their own learning, applied experiences, and built relationships with peers (Beder, 1982). Findings showed that emphasis on immediate application and utilization of their experiences guided the learning process of adult members of cohort groups. Barnett and Caffarella (1992) found that cohesion and interactions within cohort groups enabled instructors to suggest the adult students' experiences were used for reflection, journal writing, developing personal examples, and classroom discussions.

Barnett and Muse (1993) reported a cohort group's success was determined by nontraditional teaching methods and organization. They suggest including initial development activities, reflective seminars, and continued interaction and involvement of students. Critical to the success of a cohort group is selection of the members. Some universities use extensive screening procedures for student selection to ensure a diverse group of students based on gender, ethnicity, learning styles, experiences, and future goals.

In a study by Reynolds and Hebert (1998), more areas of similarity than differences in learning were reported by cohort than noncohort group structures. There was significantly higher cohort-member learning in the affective domain, slightly higher student transfer of knowledge, and mixed learning results in the cognitive domain. Young adults in cohort groups showed greater learning gains than their noncohort counterparts. In the area of affective development, except for persons 50 and older, group members showed greater gains. The pattern for full-time compared to part-time students was mixed. Students reported enhanced affective learning in cohorts despite mean class size.

Male students, young adults, and students new to programs showed the greatest learning gains in cohorts. Women were more likely than men to develop and sustain relationships in all types of groups. The format of courses might not be as important to student success as personal goals, student characteristics, and quality of effort. Thus, cohort grouping might affect learning, but multiple sources of interaction also affected learning. Cohort programs might create administrative efficiency, increased convenience for students, and enhanced student access to programs. The added finding of learning gains, especially in the affective area, provides additional benefit for students. Apparently, cohort formatting of course work assists in maximizing potential for increased student learning.

Another important technique when using a contextual sociocultural classroom approach is dialogue. A classroom is transformed through dialogue—the process of communicating, challenging, and affirming meaning. Significantly, the voice of each student is grounded in political, social, historical, sexual, and economic context that is unique yet related to the culture of others. Classrooms that are culturally responsive promote needed dialogue and reciprocity. They foster trust, respect, caring, and a sense of community (Bedard, 2001).

Barlas (2001) observed, “Creating a context that supports learning within relationship processes can facilitate adult learners’ abilities to critically reflect on social and political issues and take actions to free themselves and others from deterministic forms of existence” (p. 1). Barlas identified such a process as transformative learning. As a result of membership in a cohort weekend, participants at a small graduate school in California challenged their existing frames of reference, the validity and appropriateness

of their ideas, and their personal actions and those of others. According to Barlas, “building safe and trusting relationships in the cohort across differences allowed these learners to feel discomfort around diverse perspectives and yet remain engaged in learning” (p. 2). Students in the cohort indicated they learned by reflecting on the value of the discomfort. Barlas found the faculty of the cohort learning program created a learning environment that facilitated the integration of the students’ social and cultural life experiences with their cohort learning experiences.

One student said,

I think it was the respect from the teachers that I felt. I did not feel that they thought that I knew nothing and that they were there to teach me [everything]. It was very strongly a case of “you have something to offer here, too.” (Barlas, 2001, p. 3)

The value students felt contributed to their self-esteem and empowerment related to risk-taking and growth. This confidence supported the development of capacities to question previously held worldviews and to alter the ways they engaged in their social worlds. Students began to apply an understanding of transformation theory to their social interactions. By inviting diverse perspectives into work and social activities, they were able to create alternative actions based on their capacities to reflect, alter, and integrate their perspectives as well as those of others. Many students in the cohort programs took actions in their workplaces, communities, and personal relationships that contributed to transforming social structures that perpetuated unjust and oppressive practices. Transformative learning shifted perspectives; it was a dynamic process that learners could use to interface actively with their social worlds to foster social change.

Academic Administrative Leadership and Learning Communities

In the present age of student and school accountability, an administrator is faced with several factors beyond his/her control: (a) changing student populations, (b) rapidly expanding knowledge, (c) increasing accountability requirements, (d) the explosion of knowledge and technology, and (e) expectations for provision of more services for students and families. Although administrators of the past may have been able to survive with 50% to 75% of their students learning, present administrators find themselves working under the recent federal legislation of No Child Left Behind (PL 107–110). The expectation is that all students will learn. The challenges and opportunities are for present-day students to participate in a more equitable and quality society. The principal must help ensure social justice so that disadvantaged members of a community learn (Matthews & Crow, 2003). It is critical during preparation to become a school administrator that the aspiring principal is made aware of the importance of developing and sustaining a supportive learning community.

A recent paper, presented at an American Education Research Association (AERA) annual meeting (Zellner, Jinkens, Gideon, Doughty, & McNamara, 2002) cited four items needed to sustain the principalship:

1. A mentor network for ongoing support throughout the career
2. The mentoring of teachers and assistant principals into future leadership positions
3. Providing leadership positions to address school issues, problem solving, and leadership activities that help build a learning community
4. Opportunities for professional development throughout their careers. (p. 5)

Planning processes that feature group consensus provide opportunities to create school culture. Important decisions such as shared beliefs, school mission, educational objectives, priorities, operating principles, and scheduling help staff members unify their purpose. Building consensus fosters open communication, collegiality, and trust. Meaningful decision making can go farther than the scope of site-based decisions. Empowerment of teachers, parents, and students is the result of involvement in decision making when a vision for the future is the focus (Sorenson, Machell, & Berube, 1995).

An example of developing a learning community is the work of Barbara Gideon, principal of a high school in Austin, Texas. Dr. Gideon brought about campus change by encouraging teams of teachers to analyze data. Teams consisted of teachers grouped by department, grade level, and curriculum content areas. Decisions were based on the expertise of the members of the teams (Gideon, 2000).

According to Dr. Gideon, change must address the real needs of the school identified via close interpersonal relationships between the principal and teachers. Encouragement is helpful, yet one must expect problems. Recommendations cited in her work include encouragement of the members of the school community of learners to dialogue, critique, and reflect on their own teaching and learning practices. Teachers must understand that leadership is defined by actions of all professional members of the school, not just the principal (Gideon, 2000).

A growing number of female African American administrators have been seeking career advancement to serve in urban school settings. More times than not, inadequate training and experience levels among teachers and administrators working in urban schools leads to social and health issues within the schools. Hill and Ragland (1995)

wrote: “The critical nature of a physical facility and climate on the constant verge of emergency prohibits the proper attention, support, and guidance to beginning staff. After a few months of trial by fire, many young teachers exit the profession” (p. 46).

Adding to this dilemma, the exit levels of urban principals continue to be high, with reports that decisions to leave before retirement age are due to the effects of an untenable stress level (Cistone & Stevenson, 2000). Urban school leadership requires the principal understand the long-term effects of poverty, the disparities in local school funding, the impact of vast unemployment within the neighborhood of the school, the effect of crime within the school, the need for interagency collaboration, and the lack of parental involvement. Cistone and Stevenson (2000) wrote:

Given the sharply different social, economic and political conditions that characterize urban and nonurban schools, the professional practice of urban principals is significantly different from that of their nonurban counterparts. For the most part, however, studies of the principalship have not differentiated the scope and nature of the urban principal’s role from that of principals in nonurban school environments. (p. 435)

Preparation programs should stress the importance of: (a) reflection on leadership practices, (b) building a mentor network (cohorts of students to work together throughout the graduate study process), (c) linking theory to practice, and (d) real-world experiences to develop leadership skills prior to taking an administrative position (Gideon, 2000).

Leithwood’s (1992) studies promoted the concept of transformational leadership as an outgrowth of educational leadership. He maintains one of the main tasks of school leaders is to help create an environment where teachers collaborate to identify the

school's mission and goals. Bloom and Erlandson (2003) wrote: "[T]he only way you can get people to follow you (is) they have to know that you are working just as hard as they are" (p. 355).

The Administrator's Influence on Student Achievement

Rost (1991) wrote, "Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their shared purposes" (p. 10). As the principal works within this definition, he or she influences—witnessing leadership among the school leaders and followers for significant changes that are purposeful in creating a learning environment for all students (Matthews & Crow, 2003).

The relationship between students, parents, and staff is important. Bloom and Erlandson (2003) noted that many students and parents in urban public schools are dependent on the school to provide educational and emotional sustenance that should come from the home. In a study of three urban principals, Bloom and Erlandson (2003) found that each participant discussed a personal philosophy about educating students of poverty. Each conveyed a nurturing spirit that was pivotal in their decision-making process and in creating a culture of caring. Each of them reconstructed power and gave it to others, both formally and informally. They indicated feelings of empowerment in the struggle for social justice.

Dillard (1995) proposed a collaborative leadership style, combined with the ability to facilitate conflict, for sustained, school-wide academic achievement. Becoming politically savvy to be able to discern what issues deserve time and attention enhance the principal's effectiveness, without compromising school goals (Portin, 2000).

Other statements that principals matter in relation to school climate and student achievement were found in reviews on school effectiveness research conducted by Levine and Lezotte (1990). Leithwood (1998) reported that, internationally, school principals are increasingly held accountable for educational quality in the belief that student success is determined by the way a school is run. Research results from Witziers, Bosker, and Kruger (2003) suggested that school leadership has a positive and significant affect on student achievement.

Murphy (1988) offered a different opinion. He doubted whether educational leadership effects exist and doubted their importance. Murphy concluded the existing knowledge base failed to offer proof that educational leadership mattered. He argued not enough research was conducted in this area and most studies in the field were of poor quality.

Hallinger and Heck (1998) looked at empirical literature on principal effects published between 1980 and 1995. In their review of 40 studies, they identified different models used to investigate the relationship between school leadership and student achievement. They looked at direct effect models, suggesting that the principal's practices affect school outcomes that can be measured separately from other related variables. The mediated effect model hypothesizes that leaders achieve effect on school outcomes through indirect paths. The leader's influence is mediated by other factors such as people, events, organization and culture. The reciprocal effect suggests that relationships between the principal, school, and environment are interactive. According to Hallinger and Heck (1998), studies of indirect effect models showed that school leadership had a greater impact on student performance than direct effect models do.

The review of literature revealed several university programs in the United States and Canada are styled using the cohort model, as was the UNT/DISD/SREB leadership program. There were both similarities and differences when compared to the UNT/DISD/SREB program. Principal preparation programs are plentiful. Several cohort-styled leadership programs are described in the following section.

Components of Other Cohort-styled Leadership Preparation Programs

Abilene Christian University proposed changes to their educational administration program that resulted in a transition from classroom to online learning beginning in fall 2006. They offer a principal preparation program as well as a superintendent certification program. The superintendent program is scheduled to change to an online format by the summer of 2008. Their education department was renamed the College of Education and Human Services. Their present cohort model of course completion is being replaced by online courses.

A Master of Education distance-learning degree is offered at Auburn University. Two cohort groups are set up on a rotation to complete the coursework in 2 academic years and 2 summers. Web-based courses are used with streaming video lectures that add information. Students complete discussions and presentations in PowerPoint format. Two on-campus weekend seminars are held. Students communicate via e-mail and message board (Barry, 2004).

Colorado State University offers an Adult Education and Training master's degree program structured around cohort groups. The 33-semester-hour Master of Education program is delivered to selected community colleges in Colorado using two-way interactive video and the Internet. Two-way interactive video on Thursday evenings is the

schedule for all first-year students; the second year is tailored to each student's needs. Daylong visits are held three Fridays each semester on the Colorado State University campus. A 2001 graduate stated: "I have gained an awareness of the importance of providing learning opportunities that allow for adult participants to create their own knowledge, develop self-directed skills, and be interdependent with others" (Davies, 2004).

A 1998 participant in the training said:

As this culmination project draws to a close, we have become a cohort. On this journey, we have all learned about adult education through personal experiences. . . . When people are validated for their strengths . . . education becomes an entirely different process. . . . It has become a testimonial to andragogy in action, and we, as a cohort, have all been profoundly changed because of this experience. (Davies, 2004, p. 10)

Members of the University Graduate School of Education's National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy studied the Continuing Education Institute (CEI) in Watertown, Maryland, to determine the effectiveness of the program for adults enrolled as cohort participants in the CEI Adult Diploma Program at the Polaroid Corporation. A portion of the evaluation Harvard completed ("Harvard Research," 2005) reads:

Cohort members worked in collaborative learning groups in all five of their classes . . . this type of group learning among cohort members facilitated academic development and provided psychological support through social interaction. . . . The interpersonal relationships that peers developed in the cohort

made a critical difference to their academic learning, emotional and psychological well-being, and ability to broaden their perspectives. (pp. 384–385)

The Highlander Folk School, established by Miles Horton of the Highlander Research Education Center, brings people together to solve problems and create social change. Participants spend 2 weeks in residence preceding the work they accomplish in their doctoral program. They have limited access to telephones, television, or interaction with family members. They spend time together writing, reading, singing, speaking, listening, and dancing as they question, learn, share, and learn to trust each other. Characteristics of the residential adult learning center are immersion, group support/relationship development, course content, and opportunities for informal learning (Lawrence, 2000).

In this program, three courses acquaint students with underlying philosophies of the program, including critical thinking, collaborative learning, and life history. Students share personal narratives during small group activities. During the coursework, participants gain knowledge and understanding far beyond that of traditional classrooms. Cohesiveness of the group following their residential learning experiences is evident as the members of the group continue to learn together outside of the classroom sessions.

Michigan State University, College of Education, offers a school principal preparation program. The master's program is held on the main campus in Grand Rapids and in Birmingham. The programs contain internships as well as academic courses; participation is within a cohort group of students. The K–12 administration training program ranks ninth among administration programs in the United States. The Department of Educational Administration is a full member of the University Council for

Educational Administration, a consortium of major research universities that emphasize educational leadership and policy (Michigan State University, 2006).

Simon Fraser University (SFU), located in British Columbia, Canada, provides graduate education to cohorts of nontraditional adult students based on ideas of transformational learning. Transformational learning is the thought process by which people revise prior knowledge of their experiences in order to frame new interpretations to guide future actions. The program encourages “reflection-in-action.” Reflection allows examination of ideas about professional practices and encourages those ideas to become active. Through the program, one can earn a professionally oriented Master of Education degree.

The Master of Education degree from Simon Fraser University is open to nontraditional students and is offered off-campus. It is designed to attract graduate students who want an advanced degree, but who wish to remain in their own communities. In addition to the transformative leadership emphasis, participants can explore the philosophical, cultural, and political contexts of their roles as educators while they remain active in their jobs.

The SFU program consists of six-semester courses followed by a comprehensive exam. Participants attend class on alternate weekends. There is a 6-week summer residential session during which various cohort groups mix in courses held on the SFU home campus. Coursework consists of (a) educational trends and developments; (b) program planning, implementation, and evaluation; (c) philosophies; (d) political and social contexts of education; and (e) dealing with teaching and learning. The initial coursework is designed to foster an environment in which students challenge each other

and share understandings. The last course is a graduate seminar based on self-directed learning, critical reflections, and transformative learning (Nesbit, 2001).

Carol, a student in a SFU cohort group, stated:

Cohorts are created, not born. They are successful when everyone works collaboratively and collectively on improving their own and others' learning experiences. It takes self-responsibility, patience, courage, humor, commitment, sensitivity, and a lot of hard work to create such an enriching learning experience for everybody. (Nesbit, 2001, p. 5)

Brenda, another SFU cohort student, said:

The dynamics of working in such a group are so different from working on your own—you get other perspectives, have to defend your own, sometimes you change what you think. The end result is way more than just the sum of the parts. (Nesbit, 2001, p. 6)

Students at SFU use peer-editing, e-mail discussion groups, and study circles to help those in isolation stay in touch both during the program and after the program ends. Transformational learning is apparent as students formulate what they do in their professional lives, and the activities involved in their jobs, in order to examine essential elements and possible alternatives they might use.

The State University of West Georgia (2006) offers an educational leadership major with an emphasis on the development of leaders for today and tomorrow's schools. Two cohort groups are offered: student leadership and L5 certification. Courses are delivered online Monday through Thursday from 4:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and from 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. (Douvani, 2004).

Tarleton State University in Stephenville, Texas offers a cohort-based principal certification program called the *New Century Educational Leadership Program*. The program is in collaboration with school districts, regional education service centers, and professional associations. The program involves two summers of full-day instruction and three regular semesters of academic preparation. At the core of the program is on-the-job experience. A mentor from the university collaborates with a site-based mentor to oversee various field activities. The campus mentor serves as a guide and resource as the intern works through different field experiences. Highlights of the program are on-the-job administrative activities including online reflective reactions to experiences, off-site campus visits, the creation of a professional portfolio, and campus planning (Winn, 2005).

The University of Northern Iowa offers a Master of Arts in Education degree with a major in principalship. The major is designed for persons seeking school principal endorsement/certification in the state of Iowa. The program involves participation in a 3-year cohort group. Course delivery is mainly via distance education utilizing the Iowa Communications Network (ICN) but includes some on-campus, face-to-face instruction. ICN classrooms are set up in every Iowa school district via fiber optics that provide live feed from any origination point. New cohort groups are started yearly during the fall semester (Engelbrecht, 2004).

Another cohort-styled program in educational administration is available at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The program began in 1996 with two cohort groups of graduate students from the Omaha Public Schools district. Cohort groups for doctoral studies began in fall 1997. The programs allow students to take required courses together

and in the same sequence, while allowing self-selected electives. The cohort programs let students network to form close friendships that may last beyond the classroom and program (Efforts, 2004).

In 1990, the University of Wyoming implemented an alternative leadership program in selected school districts throughout the state. The purpose of the program, funded with a grant from the Danforth Foundation, is to educate teachers and administrators, allowing them to become change agents in their schools. The key components of the program are:

1. Development of an integrated proficiency-based curriculum to merge theory and practice
2. Extended internship experience
3. Classes of students that enter and exit the program as a cohort group
4. Process for screening and selection of candidates for the program. (Sorenson, 2004, p. 6)

The content of the administrator preparation program includes (a) human relations, (b) organizational management, (c) personnel development, (d) educational leadership, and (e) communication (Sorenson, 2004).

Exemplary administrators work with the faculty as facilitators of learning. They serve as supervising administrators and mentors for students in their field-based experiences. In the screening process for the program, activities are scheduled to give insight into the probability of the candidate becoming a compassionate, empowering, visionary change agent. Many forms of authentic assessment are used during the courses

of study: (a) demonstrations of competency, (b) portfolio development, (c) reflection, and (e) opportunities for self-assessment.

Regarding the cohort experience, a student commented: “Although the cohort experience has been shown to be a powerful component of the program, better providing for the needs of individual cohort members and more aggressively facilitating group development can make improvements (Sorenson, 2004, p. 12).

Western Governors University is a nonprofit university created by 19 state governors (including Texas governor Rick Perry) to offer working adults a cost-effective, high-quality education. It offers online bachelors, masters and post-baccalaureate teacher education programs. It also offers Master of Education programs, including an English Language Learning program. The school works with every state in the United States to ensure that graduates meet specific state licensure requirements.

The programs are designed to meet the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (PL 107–110) that require teachers to be “highly qualified” in core academic subjects. The cohort-based programs that are offered are regionally accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities and nationally accredited by the Distance Education and Training Council (DETC). It also offers degrees, endorsements, and certificate programs that meet NCLB requirements for elementary, mathematics, and science teachers (Sorber, 2005).

There are many choices available to persons interested in advanced degrees, endorsements, and certificates. The prospective student should obtain enough information to make informed choices since there is variation in program philosophies, management,

expectations, time, and money. Administrative preparation programs are not alike; one needs to study the strengths and weaknesses of any program under consideration.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Administration Preparation Programs

A study by Achilles (1994) showed that for more than 40 years the intended focus in administrative preparation programs was to create practitioner-oriented coursework that ended in an internship (as cited in Bogotch, 2001). However, innovations such as field-based activities and internships have created other program needs such as field-based mentoring, rubric criteria, and portfolio assessments. The enrollment of university preparation programs increased to meet the needs of school districts looking for increased numbers of principal candidates. It is not unusual to find cohort models composed completely of candidates from only one school district. The use of distance learning through increased technology is another initiative used by universities to meet the increasing demand for these programs.

According to Gideon (2000), principal preparation programs should teach the role of the principal has changed from principal as “the leader” to principal as “the facilitator” of leadership. A review of literature on the subject of strengths and weaknesses in administration preparation courses showed a variety of opinions about these programs. Most sources were generated from students participating in the courses, from alumni, or from program coordinators.

Maxwell (2004) reported strengths of some preparation courses included personnel issues such as loyalty and commitment of dedicated faculty. Positive thoughts about the faculty included their accessibility, excellence, quality, and knowledge. Participants also made other positive comments about personnel that included the

following areas: (a) strong leadership of program planners; (b) capable and hard-working students; (c) dedicated personnel; (d) supportive alumni; (e) a strong national network of successful alumni and friends at other educational institutions; (f) low student-to-teacher ratio; (g) strong student support services; (h) quality of graduates; (i) good personal interactions among students, staff, administration, and faculty; (j) strong opportunities for advancement; (k) relative autonomy for faculty research and development; (l) strong moral integrity of the institution and its people; (m) close student/educator relationships; and (n) approachable faculty for mentoring.

According to research reports, students work collaboratively to enrich their learning experiences and to promote their chosen profession while making meaningful contributions to the campus and community. Programs give a solid foundation in student development theory and in the history of higher education (University of Maine, 2006). One graduate said, “The practical experience and professional connections gained through internships and assistantships are extremely valuable” (University of Maine, p. 3).

Other research (University of North Alabama, 2006) report sources outside the university are the strengths of some programs. Sources include: (a) effective partnerships with outside organizations, (b) services that are a focus for the state and region, (c) program location, (d) community support for the university, (e) affordability of tuition, (f) supportive city government, and (g) an inviting Web page that is attractive to prospective students, parents of prospective students, alumni, prospective employees, and other friends of the University of North Alabama.

According to research (University of North Alabama, 2006), planning can be a strength. Important to all stakeholders is a vision embedded in the strategic plan and offering a variety of subjects while maintaining positive momentum that reduces anxiety and discord. Faculty, administrators, program planners, and students are allowed growth through diverse programs and a challenging curriculum. Possessing a commitment to international programs and honors programs intensifies course offerings for all students. Automated and efficient registration systems help students select classes with minimum effort.

Additionally, the climate of an institution of higher learning is a significant strength-building factor. Important pieces in building a quality educational climate include a balanced research and teaching mission, a respected tradition of excellence and progressive accomplishments, opportunities for learning and growth, good reputation, desire for continual improvement, sense of identity, student-centered environment with excellent customer service, and diversity. Program diversity includes demographic diversity as well as diversity in opinions and in classes that are offered (Maxwell, 2004). A history of providing a quality education for students is an important factor in students choosing to enter a university's program. According to Maxwell, a culture of caring about students and a strong curriculum are important to the success of a university.

In addition to a strong curriculum, administrative preparation programs are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, with disciplinary accreditation and certification from nationally recognized accrediting bodies such as NCATE. Provision for equal opportunities in education without regard to financial need,

gender, ethnicity, or disabling condition is important to the integrity of program offerings.

The strength of any program is shown in types of facilities and services available to students, such as a wellness center, student services, the availability of networks and computer labs, and access to library materials (University of West Georgia, 2006).

Institutions should also meet or address unique needs of nontraditional students for such services as child care, remedial education, class availability on weekends and evenings, and support services outside of traditional working hours and work days. Hence, facilities are considered vital elements in campus life. Additional weaknesses in facilities are seen in classrooms that are not productive learning environments: inappropriate desks, aging campus structures, inadequate parking situations, housing facilities that are inadequate, and limited access to distance learning for advanced degrees for working citizens (University of North Alabama, 2006).

Some weaknesses noted in a university program in administrative preparation are polar opposites of those reported as strengths. Personnel can be a weakness. There may be a lack of good leadership that is responsive to needs of the faculty. Foreign teachers, with heavy accents, may be difficult for students to understand. Many times, there can be difficulty in attracting and retaining highly productive faculty members. Resistance to change, inadequate administrative support, high turnover of deans, and an administration that is inaccessible to students are problematic for some programs. Faculty members may not be on the same team. There may be too few women in the upper echelon, with a high staff and faculty turnover rate. Maxwell (2004) reported inconsistent faculty/teaching quality as one of the most frequently mentioned weaknesses, with lack of experience and

lack of maturity being singled out. There is also perception that tough decisions are delayed or avoided (University of West Georgia, 2006). Communication needs are also a problem—lack of healthy dialogue and conflict management, lack of diversity and respect of diversity on campus, and lack of involvement and interest by administration in student activities and accomplishments.

Funding issues for faculty, departments, travel, and curriculum development are also cited as weaknesses. Some key issues noted in research are (a) lack of expanding infrastructure, (b) attempts to do too much with too few resources, (c) substandard salaries for faculty, (d) growth without needed resources, (e) need to increase funding sources, (f) need for support of technology, and (g) a lack of funding for the library. Substantial cuts in legislative appropriations result in the elimination or reduction of funds for research, equipment, faculty, and staff development. Resources for scholarships, graduate assistantships, fellowships, endowed chairs, and endowed professorships are needed to provide support for recruiting, enrolling, retaining, and graduating students.

Populations can be an area of concern for administration preparation programs. Some areas of weakness are (a) lack of diversity in faculty and student body, (b) weak and unprepared students, (c) increased bureaucratization, (d) classes that are too small, (e) downplaying and suppression of recommendations from outside assessments and accreditation teams, and (f) lack of nationwide recognition.

There is also a need for great flexibility in university processes. Other weaknesses include lack of research as a focus, little or no recognition outside of the region, inferior academic programs, lack of entertainment and retail areas that attract students, lack of

shared vision, poor job of communicating accomplishments to the public, and stagnant, unchanging curriculum in some areas (*Strategic Plan II*, 2004).

Hayward (2004) reported results of a study by the Human Investment Research and Education Center at California State University, which found a majority of program participants did not see graduate programs as improving their employment opportunities or as a way to get a promotion (48.2%), job (60.7%), better job (49.1%), or administrative position (48.2%). However, graduate students were generally satisfied with the components of the programs, except for the availability of courses, classes, and career advising. Students knew very little about university-wide services such as housing, public transportation, and career advising services. Students desired increased emphasis on oral communication, presentation, and real life practices as case studies and less emphasis on group work and projects (Maxwell, 2004).

Bloom and Erlandson (2003) suggested a more culturally relevant preparatory curriculum for future urban school leaders could include the stories of African American and Latino men and women who make a difference by the way they lead urban schools. A curriculum such as this could create a significant change in the way urban schools are understood and led.

Adult students are more motivated by intrinsic goals than by career goals. They have a significant reserve of life experiences they use as a basis for learning. They tend to develop strong relationships with peers and desire their education be meaningful and relevant in their lives. They have a deeper approach to learning that involves wisdom, interpretation, and is relativistic, rather than mere reproduction of material for an exam.

Higher education program providers need an appreciation for members of a group in terms of their educational goals, motivation, and barriers they overcome in order to participate in the program. Most evaluations of administrative preparation programs suggest continual reviews as critical to the success of the programs. Many preparation programs have advisory committees consisting of principals, business leaders, parents, teachers, and former participants. These committees review and advise program planners regarding goals, processes, and outcomes (Lauder, 2000). Suggestions from stakeholders create changes in programs to meet needs of the community and program participants better (Copland, 2001).

Professors of the sponsoring institution conduct most evaluations of principal-preparation programs or other persons involved in development of the leadership preparation programs. These researchers acknowledge bias in that they wanted their programs to appear successful.

Although leadership preparation courses are designed with program participants in mind, little research has shown the link among the programs, school improvement, and student achievement. Most institutions redesign existing course offerings to meet requirements for completion of principal certification, as problem-based learning, field-based activities and internships are incorporated into coursework.

Few studies that show new activities produce principals who improve schools and raise student achievement levels. According to Giles and Hargreaves (2006),

The learning organization and professional learning community model may provide . . . more . . . resistance to conventional processes, . . . but . . . it shows

signs of defaulting to conventional patterns of schooling in the face of standardized reform. (p. 155).

There is no research to show principals educated in redesigned leadership preparation programs make any more difference in school improvement and student achievement than do those in traditional administrative preparation programs. Suggestions for administrators exist in prestigious educational publications. In an important SREB publication, Hoachlander (2001) argued for training in data analysis for administrators in order to promote school improvement and higher student performance. Also in SREB documents, Norton (2003) suggests principal training is not sufficient to raise student achievement scores, but training should be done in collaboration with a team of teachers. After interviewing successful principals, he found “it was a group of teachers working with them [principals] in a leadership role” (p. 2). Norton pointed to the need to ... help principals and their teams understand school and classroom practices that raise student achievement, learn to work with faculty to improve the quality of assignments and student work, and use data to lead change. . . .Teams can learn how school practices influence classroom instruction, how to set up extra-help programs that support high expectations in the classroom, and how to design effective, targeted professional development. (p. 16)

Investigation of principal preparation programs was important to this study for thorough understanding of expectations of these important leaders in our culture. The study of many preparation programs made the focus of the UNT/DISD/SREB program better understood. Especially helpful in this effort were previous studies of the UNT program completed by Newman (2004) and Adkison (2004).

Other Studies of the UNT/DISD/SREB Program

Newman (2004) completed an initial evaluation of the UNT/DISD/SREB program. Her study is germane to the current study because it was done at the conclusion of the first year of study by program participants. Newman's research provided a useful evaluation at the halfway point of the first cohort group's participation in the program. Program participants completed questionnaires, participated in group discussions, and answered individual interview questions that generated the data for the Newman study. For comparison purposes an analysis of Newman's findings from research at the midpoint in the first cohort's program is presented in the following section in terms of the research questions posed in the current investigation.

Research Question 1

How did participation in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program change the involvement of the administrative interns in campus-based decision making?

During interview sessions conducted by Newman (2004) interns were asked whether they had been more involved in campus-based decision-making processes during the school year in which they were in the program than they had in the past. Only 4 interns reported being involved in any real decision-making processes in which they were not involved prior to participation in the program.

Interns from 3 schools reported involvement in the budget process. Interns from 7 schools reported limited involvement in preparation of the budget. Most principals believed they were including their interns in more campus-based decision-making processes than the interns reported. Fourteen interns were assigned more duties but were not involved in any decisions at their schools. Most of the ten mentor principals did not

provide administrative opportunities for their interns in decision-making processes. The interns expressed frustration they did not have an impact on improvements at their campuses.

Research Question 2

How has participation in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program changed the ways the administrative interns perceive themselves?

Newman's (2004) dissertation determined the majority of interns reported acceptance and cooperation from teachers and school administrators when an intern-initiated field-based project was assigned. The interns reported greater acceptance of new ideas and leadership principles from school administrators than from their teaching peers. Teachers became more supportive when they realized the amount of work the interns were assigned.

Twenty of the interns reported participation in the program changed the way they perceived themselves in terms of maturity, professional growth, and belief in themselves. Most answered they were thinking more as an administrator and less as a teacher. Fourteen indicated they had confidence to assume a leadership position. Of the class members who answered the question of their desire to become a school principal, most indicated that was their goal. Most indicated they had learned more about their personal leadership style by participating in the program.

Participants in the program reported changes in their self-perceptions in four areas-maturity, professional growth, personal strengths and weaknesses, and belief in themselves. Growth in personal maturity was the change reported most often by interns as a result of participation in the UNT/DISD Leadership Development Program. Some

indicated they needed to take things more seriously and realized areas of needed improvement. There were indications of becoming a better teacher and learning to cooperate.

Regarding how participation in the program changed the interns' perceptions of themselves as prospective school administrators, they reported their learning made them more globally minded, gave them a better understanding of what principals do, showed the need for collaboration between teachers and principals, and promoted confidence in their ability to be an administrator.

Members of the cohort realized as administrators, they would be responsible for all the children in a school and not just the children assigned to their individual classrooms. They reported having new insight into all the workings of a school including personnel and dealing with all children and their needs. All had a sense that the principal makes a difference in school programs as cited by Matthews and Crow (2003).

Research Question 3

What actions have the members of the cohort group taken in their teacher-leader/administrative positions to affect student achievement?

Several answers to Question 3 were found in the Newman (2004) dissertation. Interns reported learning positive traits about educational leadership from their internship program. For example, Newman concluded an educational leader

- Believes that everybody (staff/students) can achieve
- Works well with a team
- Is able to motivate teachers and students
- Is consistent

- Knows the importance of being encouraging
- Is good at organization, preparation and planning
- Understands the importance of good documentation
- Takes everything in stride
- Stays under control
- Does not have to be hated to be a good principal
- Is patient
- Is visible to teachers and students
- Puts instruction first
- Does everything for the students
- Is persistent to get what he or she wants
- Is firm and fair
- Always hears all sides
- Leads by example
- Knows the importance of being truthful. (pp. 118 – 119)

Research Question 4

The last research question, “What are the strengths and weaknesses of the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program partnership from the viewpoint of the program participants?” was answered in part in the interim evaluation. Eighteen interns who were interviewed were excited about the possibility of becoming the new breed of school leader, if that meant focusing on academics and how children learn. They appreciated the call from SREB for school leaders to be strong instructional leaders. They

also noted the “push” for collaboration in “principaling.” They liked the fact that everybody in the building is used to promote success (Newman, 2004).

In the review of related documents, this researcher studied an unpublished survey (Adkison, 2004) completed by participants of the principal-training cohort. Adkison investigated 23 competencies of principals and 19 characteristics of principal preparation programs to glean information from this cohort of students. Competencies were derived from the Test Framework for Principals found in the Texas Examination of Educator Standards (TExES) and related to the Standards for Advanced Programs in Educational Leadership used by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) to evaluate university-based principal preparation programs. According to those competencies, the principal should know how to:

1. Shape campus culture by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community
2. Communicate and collaborate with all members of the school community, respond to diverse interests and needs, and mobilize resources to promote student success
3. Act with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical and legal manner
4. Facilitate effective campus curriculum planning based on knowledge of social/cultural issues, occupational and economic trends, demographic data, student learning data, motivation theory, teaching and learning theory, curriculum design principles, human development, and legal requirements

5. Use sound, research-based practice in the development, implementation, and evaluation of campus curriculum, co-curricular, and extra-curricular programs
6. Facilitate collaborative planning to ensure appropriate scope, sequence, content, and alignment of curriculum
7. Facilitate the use of appropriate assessments to measure student learning and ensure educational accountability
8. Facilitate the use of technology, telecommunications, and information systems to enrich the campus curriculum
9. Promote the use of creative thinking, critical thinking, and problem solving by staff and other campus stake-holders involved in curriculum design and delivery
10. Advocate, nurture, and sustain an instructional program and a campus culture that are conducive to student learning and staff professional growth
11. Facilitate the development of a campus learning organization that supports instructional improvement and change through ongoing study of relevant research and best practice
12. Use formative and summative student assessment data to develop, support, and improve campus instructional strategies and goals
13. Facilitate the development, implementation, evaluation, and refinement of student services and activity programs to fulfill academic, developmental, social, and cultural needs
14. Ensure responsiveness to diverse sociological, linguistic, cultural, and other factors that may affect students' development and learning

15. Implement a staff evaluation and development system to improve the performance of all staff members, select and implement appropriate modes for supervision and staff development, and apply the legal requirements for personnel management
16. Apply organizational, decision-making, and problem-solving skills to ensure an effective learning environment
17. Apply procedures for effective budget planning and management
18. Acquire, allocate, and manage human, material and financial resources according to district policies and campus priorities
19. Apply laws and policies to ensure sound financial management in relation to accounts, bidding, purchasing, and grants
20. Use effective planning, time management, and organization of personnel to maximize attainment of district and campus goals
21. Develop and implement plans for using technology and information systems to enhance school management
22. Apply principles of leadership and management to the campus physical plant and support systems to ensure a safe and effective learning environment
23. Promote the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural context (Texas Examinations of Educator Standards Preparation Manual, 2006).

Nineteen characteristics found in some principal preparation programs were included in the survey:

1. Recruitment and selection criteria that ensures high quality students and candidates for Principal Certification
2. Participation in a cohort group of learners that progressed through the program together
3. Field experiences in participating schools during the preparation program and prior to the internship
4. A supervised internship that provided significant opportunities to synthesize and to apply theory and practice in an appropriate school setting
5. Pedagogical emphases on inquiry, student involvement and collaboration
6. Sequence of courses and experiences that resulted in a coherent program
7. An emphasis on understanding and using research
8. Use of simulations, case studies, and approaches as instructional methods
9. Traditional forms of assessment such as written quizzes and examinations
10. Emphasis on international or global perspectives of education
11. Instructional Leadership Development (ILD) training
12. Used professional experiences such as field trips and participation in conference to expand perspectives on education
13. Use of Portfolio as an assessment tool
14. Use of Web-based instruction
15. Specific preparation for the Principal Certification Exam (ExCET or TExES)
16. Mentoring by school district administration
17. Mentoring by university faculty
18. Job placement assistance

19. Regular contact initiated by my university after I completed the program (NPBEA, 2002).

In response to the research question of how participation in the program changed the involvement of the administrative interns in campus-based decision making, it was evident from the Adkison (2004) questionnaire that participants were capable of facilitating effective campus curriculum planning based on their knowledge of social and cultural issues, occupational and economic trends, demographic data, student learning data, motivation theory, teaching and learning theory, curriculum design principles, human development, and legal requirements. They also were able to facilitate collaborative planning to ensure scope, sequence, content, and alignment of curriculum. Most expressed comfort in their ability to facilitate the development of a campus learning organization to support instructional improvement and change through ongoing study of relevant research and best practices. Most indicated they were able to apply organizational, decision-making, and problem-solving skills to ensure an effective learning environment. Members of the group reported that their university course work was a beneficial program that facilitated school improvement. Knowledge of research helped them improve practices at their schools.

According to their survey responses, administrative interns moved from the role of teachers as they participated in the leadership training program to take on new roles in their schools. They moved into roles that demanded a holistic campus view where they saw all entities and programs of the campus work together, a focus in their campus decision-making opportunities. Most were involved in the Campus Improvement Plan as a member of the Campus Instructional Leadership Team (CILT) and faculty advisory

committees where they worked on grants and helped provide safety and security as they gave suggestions and input.

From Adkison's (2004) survey, participants revealed they had mastered implementing effective campus curriculum planning. Most could implement Competency 5 (use sound research-based practices dealing with developing, implementing, and evaluating campus curriculum, co-curricular, and extracurricular programs). The majority of the group also possessed mastery or skills for implementing campus learning organizations to further best practices.

Regarding administrative self-perceptions, several competencies were identified from analysis of the Adkison (2004) questionnaire. Half of the group opined they were at the stage of implementing attributes of integrity, fairness, and legality in serving as school administrators. They possessed ability to promote use of creative thinking, critical thinking, and problem solving by staff and other campus stakeholders involved in curriculum design and delivery. There was not such confidence noted on Competency 22 (knowing how to apply principles of leadership and management to the campus physical plant and to support systems to ensure a safe and effective learning environment).

Individuals possessed a variety of backgrounds when they entered the leadership preparation program. Their undergraduate programs were in a variety of fields such as translation, education, history, English, health and physical education, music, music performance, biology, chemistry, international relations, theatre arts, psychology, kinesiology, political science, and criminal justice. In their graduate studies, educational administration had been the focus for most of the participants in the program. The mix of people from different backgrounds in the cohort group seems to have facilitated support

for each other and helped them bond together. There were no indications of bad feelings towards others in the program.

Half of the participants indicated readiness to communicate and collaborate with members of the school community, to respond to diverse interests and needs, and mobilize resources to promote student success. The ability to facilitate the use of appropriate assessments to measure student learning and ensure educational accountability was not as strong.

Another competency that rated high skill levels for the group was ensuring responsiveness to diverse sociological, linguistic, cultural, and other factors that may affect students' development and learning. The important skill of knowing how to promote the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context showed participants at different levels. A total of 15 respondents were prepared to begin using this skill in a school setting.

The results of the Adkison (2004) questionnaire provided insight into the characteristics of the UNT/DISD/SREB principal preparation program at the end of the coursework for the administrative interns. Feedback about program areas is important to note since this survey was completed at such an important time in the program schedule.

Participants in the program were almost unanimous in their affirmative response to participation in a cohort group of learners that progressed through the program together. One person indicated this was significant and 19 of the 20 who filled out the questionnaire said this was highly present.

Members of the group commented:

- The lack of support and actual worth of the internship done through a mentor who lacked communication skills.
- More job embedded experiences. I highly recommend a cohort program. Have an actual internship program and different placement of the practicum.
- Go with the cohort idea. I believe I have made some very good friends in my colleagues and we will be a support system for each other.

Some voiced dissatisfaction:

- I feel as if the practicum class needs to be taken alone in a full-term semester.
- I think they had us doing too much at the end of the program. I think they forgot that we were still teaching a full day with little time off.
- I would not do the practicum plus 6 hours of regular coursework in the same semester.
- Think about changing when you implement the practicum course. Spring is a very rough semester.

Members also enjoyed the use of portfolio as an assessment. Concerns were noted in lack of specific preparation for the Principal Certification Exam (ExCET or TExES) and mentoring by school district administration:

- I am concerned about accountability in the administrator's part. If they've made a commitment to mentor a student they should be accountable in providing opportunities for that student to be successful.
- Provide a checklist to the administrator/mentor of the domains and competencies and have them check them every time they provided/supported the student of opportunities to learn/acquire experience under such competency.

- A more thorough selection of mentor principals.
- In assisting with job placement, it would be helpful if the program could ensure that relevant data was made available to the district (i.e. resume, letters of recommendation, etc.) My district has none of these things nor is it clear how to update our personnel files with this information. Job placement decisions are being made without this information, which is a source of concern.
- My main concern is regarding the lack of job placement experienced by previous cohort participants.
- Will I get a job?

Regular contact initiated by the university after program completion received relatively low marks on the survey.

Other remarks made at the time of this questionnaire in May 2004, included the following:

- I believe it was a great experience. The only hardship I experienced was the financial part. In addition, instructors requiring us to buy expensive books we did not utilize.
- Excellent program. I'm very grateful I was a part of it!
- All did a wonderful job. Thanks! (Adkison, 2004)

At the time of the Adkison (2004) survey, cohort members were comfortable in the knowledge that their recruitment and selection by administrators in DISD had ensured high quality candidates for the principal certification program. Except for one person, field experiences of the program brought into the schools were viewed as successful. Respondents also approved of the use of simulations, case studies, and problem-solving

approaches used in their instruction. They valued the Instructional Leadership Development (ILD) training they received. Professional experiences through field trips and conferences were also judged meaningful by the group.

Two persons commented:

- Possibly allow field trips to observe other school or districts
- More field experiences-perhaps seeing how a suburban and rural district work

The review of literature in this chapter informed this investigation regarding reformed educational administration preparation courses available at other universities. Innovative academic administrative leadership courses focus on the influence of school administrators on student achievement. Many reformed preparation courses are styled as cohort programs, as is the UNT/DISD/SREB program. Particular information regarding this program was determined from study of both Newman (2004) and Adkison (2004) program documentation.

Newman's (2004) study provided information on self-perception and involvement of campus based decisions by each participant during the time of the program. Likewise information regarding advancement in student achievement was available from the study of her work.

The Adkison study (2004) provided insight as to information members of the cohort group gleaned from the program. This study was beneficial to determine the rigor and relevance of the program to each program participant. It was answered by every member of the group at the completion of the program when each person was ready to assume a school leadership position.

These two studies were pertinent to the current study because they provided information during the program (Newman, 2004) and at the end of the program (Adkison, 2004). After 2 years to reflect on the program, members of the group named strengths and weaknesses of the program and suggested alternative solutions for problem areas. The current study extends the knowledge from other studies so program modifications that are possible and important to the viability of the leadership program can be addressed.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study, which employs a qualitative research methodology, evaluates whether the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program met its stated goals with the first cohort group. Using the theoretical framework of the CIPP perspective, deficiencies and strengths of the program are identified.

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How did participation in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program change the involvement of the administrative interns in campus-based decision making?
2. How has participation in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program changed the ways the administrative interns perceive themselves as leaders?
3. What actions have the members of the cohort group taken in their teacher-leader/administrative positions to affect student achievement?
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program partnership from the viewpoint of the program participants?

Research Design

The study employed qualitative research methods to determine whether the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program achieved its goals (Glaser & Strauss, 1965; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Data were obtained from multiple data sources, including questionnaires, interviews, and documents related to the program participants’

assessments. These multiple data sources “compensate[d] for omissions or distortions that may arise from the use of one method” (Gredler, 1996, p. 203). Qualitative research methods helped this researcher focus on insights, discoveries, and interpretations of educational phenomena that were present in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program. Merriam (1988) stated the “qualitative case study is a particularly useful methodology for addressing problems in which understanding is sought in order to improve practice” (p. 32). The CIPP evaluation model was used to frame information about the program for key decision makers.

Merriam (1988) supports qualitative research methods to find related concepts for the research area. Merriam said, “Qualitative research is exploratory, inductive, emphasizes process rather than ends, and strives to understand how all the parts work together to form a whole” (p. 16). Hence, qualitative case study research methods offer insight and interpretations used in the study of the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program. Merriam also stated, “The qualitative case study is a particularly useful methodology for addressing problems in which understanding is sought in order to improve practice” (p. 32). This case study method proved valuable in interpreting educational phenomena to offer suggestions for future improvements in the UNT/DISD/SREB program.

The theoretical framework for this study uses the CIPP perspective, developed in 1971 and revisited in 1980 and 1985 by Stufflebeam (Gredler, 1996). The CIPP evaluation model is used in an institution to evaluate a program’s overall status, to recognize deficiencies and strengths in order to correct weaknesses, and to identify

problems that limit the well-being of the program (Stufflebeam & Shinkfeld, 1985). The CIPP framework is composed of context, input, process, and product.

Context evaluation involves initial planning decisions and indications of direction for improvement (Stufflebeam, 1980). Program goals, priorities, and needs are determined in initial stages of program development. Questions were asked through interviews to help evaluate the effectiveness of the program. This researcher determined which of the goals respondents thought were met and which were not met to judge whether proposed objectives met the assessed needs of the program.

Input evaluation involves structuring decisions for approaches to change a program. Barriers and limitations inhibiting a program are identified. In this particular case, the researcher identified which aspects of the program participants reported as beneficial to the acquisition of their skills and knowledge and which were not. Input evaluation provided a basis for judging the implementation of the program.

Implementation of decisions is the third part of the CIPP framework, referred to as “process evaluation.” Decisions for implementing and refining program design and procedure are addressed. Modification possibilities for a program are sought to provide assistance to both interested outside sources as well as to staff and administrators in charge of the program. Issues of materials, finances, budget, time, and personnel are addressed in this area of research.

The final evaluation area in the CIPP model is the finished product. In this area, decisions are rethought to judge and react to the outcomes of the program. Qualitative analysis was used to determine merits of the leadership training program. For example, which skills and knowledge program participants found most useful in their educational

practices, and specific ideas for improvements to the leadership development program?

The CIPP model is used as an evaluation tool to examine each research question as well as to plan future UNT and DISD cohort groups.

Information to answer each research question was gathered from the questionnaire each participant completed. There was a direct relationship between the goals of the program and the participants' responses on the questionnaire. The questionnaire provided answers as to whether this principal preparation program met the following program goals:

1. Support rigorous academic standards and instructional methods that motivate and engage students
2. Make meaningful connections between the abstract aspects of the curriculum and real-world learning experiences
3. Create and manage a system of support that enables all students to meet high standards and motivates faculty to have high expectations of all students
4. Set priorities for change that can be measured and managed realistically
5. Create a personal, caring school environment that helps students meet higher standards
6. Apply research knowledge to improve school practices
7. Use technology for management and instructional purposes. (*UNT/DPS, 2001*)

The questionnaire was divided into three sections for ease of completion and for guidance to aid each respondent to rethink training and experiences of the past several years. Most questions were answered on a Likert scale of four choices. Section 1 of the questionnaire, curriculum and assignments, consisted of 11 questions, 6 of which were

open-ended questions. Section 2, gains from the program, had 19 questions, some of which were open-ended questions. Section 3, background and activities, elicited demographic data and contained 11 questions.

Completed self-assessment documents from the same group of program participants were reviewed to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the UNT/DISD partnership program. These assessments are mandated every 5 years for every administrator in Texas. These assessment instruments are private—between the administrator and the assessor—but 7 of the program participants/administrators shared their responses and feedback from each of their assessments.

Participant Selection

The population for this study was the 26-member cohort of administrative interns who participated in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program. Twenty-seven persons began the program, but one withdrew due to personal reasons. All program participants were DISD teachers at different building levels: elementary, middle, and high schools. The DISD is a large, urban school district in a metropolitan area of Texas. Eight teachers were at three different elementary schools. Ten of the teachers taught at four different middle schools, and eight teachers were from three different high schools in the district.

There were 7 males and 19 females in the group of program participants. These numbers were in line with DISD percentages of teachers at the beginning of the program when 73.8% of DISD teachers were female. Seventy-three percent of the interns were from various ethnic minority populations: 46.2% were African American, 15.4% were Hispanic, and 26.9% were White.

These numbers also correlated with the ethnic breakdown of DISD teachers. African American teachers made up 41.6% of the total, similar to 46.2% of program participants. Hispanic teachers comprised 12.0% of all DISD teachers and 15.4% of program participants. White interns comprised 26.9% of the total program population, while White teachers represented 44.1% of all teachers in the DISD.

Ethnicities of the UNT/DISD/SREB program participants were not closely correlated with the ethnicities of students who attend the DISD. African American students made up 32.9% of the students at the beginning of the program. Hispanic groups comprised 58.9% of all students, and White students made up 6.7% of all students in the DISD.

Ages of administrative program participants ranged from younger than 30 years to over 50 years old. Years of teaching experience among participants averaged 10.4. The least experienced teacher had taught for 4 years, and the most experienced teacher had taught for 30 years. The average length of time program participants had been at their current schools was 5.5 years. Fourteen of the program participants went through alternative teacher certification programs. Twelve of the participants went through traditional university teacher certification programs (Newman, 2004).

Collection of Data

Multiple methods were used to collect and analyze data for this study. The use of varying sources of data as well as varying methods of data collection—including document study, interviews, and surveys—aided the researcher in verifying the validity of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Instruments used in the study included a program participant questionnaire (Appendix B), individual interviews with program

participants (Appendix C), and document analysis. One structured interview of 45 minutes to 1 hour per participant was conducted with 8 program participants who served as school administrators after completion of the program. Questions for interviews were derived from the participants' responses on the questionnaires.

The questionnaire (Appendix B) was designed for collection of different types of data: (a) demographic and historical data about each of the participants in the cohort, (b) the perceptions of the participants regarding their levels of involvement in campus decision making, (c) their perception of themselves as school leaders, and (d) their perceptions of their roles as educational leader. The review of literature suggested several questions included in the questionnaires. Research questions formed the basis for the questionnaires.

The program participant questionnaire consisted of 41 questions divided into three sections. The sections were designed to categorize responses to the research questions of the study. One of the questions required a "yes" or "no" answer. Eleven of the questions included open-ended responses to allow for greater explanations of answers. One of the open-ended responses asked for opinions about the relevance of field-based projects offered by the university to deal with real-world problems at school, followed by a question regarding explicit attributes of the program.

Answers were sought for specific aspects/experiences of the preparation program beneficial to skill and knowledge acquisition, as well as those aspects that were not beneficial. Another question requested information concerning university coursework that supported school improvement projects.

The questionnaire explored evaluation of student needs, as determined by Webster (1995), as the basic premise for educational evaluation. Included in answers to open-ended questions was information concerning enabling and motivating students to meet high standards, enabling faculty to have high expectations of all students, and each participant's contributions to student achievement. Open-ended questions also requested information about research practices, helpful skills and knowledge used in daily educational practices, and specific improvements that could be made in the program. The final section of the questionnaire asked 11 demographic and professional questions.

Members of the researcher's doctoral committee examined the questionnaire for clarity of instructions, clarity of questions, interest, redundancy, and visual appeal. The questionnaire was piloted at Abilene Christian University to a classroom of educators seeking principal certification. Three experienced education practitioners determined content validity as well as reliability by verifying information by content, responses to answers, and knowledge of individual respondents. Tests for validity and reliability of questionnaires are used by researchers as evidenced in educational research (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996). One educator was a school superintendent. Two others were college professors with doctorate degrees. One college professor was a former superintendent of a large public school district; the other was a former public school principal.

Questionnaires were distributed by the researcher with the help of the DISD administrator in charge of the UNT/DISD/SREB program. The questionnaires were delivered to the program participants by the researcher, by DISD mail, or by the United States Postal Service.

After questionnaires and interview guides were developed, different techniques were used to gather data. Administrative intern questionnaires were distributed to the 26 program participants. Nonrespondents were contacted by telephone and sent reminder letters to encourage questionnaire completion and return. Follow-up telephone and face-to-face interviews were conducted with some of the interns to gather further information regarding answers on the completed questionnaires. The researcher reviewed the *UNT/Dallas Public Schools Leadership Development Proposal* (2001) and the memorandum of agreement signed by the UNT/DISD/SREB (2002) to establish historical background information about the program.

A letter from DISD was given to program participants informing them the researcher was approved to conduct the study of the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program. Stamped, self-addressed envelopes were provided for easy response to the researcher. Follow-up telephone calls were made if necessary to obtain needed information.

A standard set of questions for individual interviews (Appendix C) was developed from the review of related literature, the questionnaire, conversations with the researcher's major professor, and responses to written questionnaires. Topics included, but were not limited to: (a) involvement in campus-based decision making, (b) relationships with other teachers and administrators on the campus, (c) perceptions about themselves as campus leaders, (d) perceptions of preparation provided by the program, and (e) perception of program participant's influence on student achievement. All interviews were conducted in a conference room or office at the school where program participants currently worked.

To ensure more in-depth answers to research questions, follow-up interviews were held with 8 program participants who secured administrative positions in DISD. Interviews lasted from 45 minutes to 1 hour in length. Based on questionnaire results, the researcher used a structured interview approach that allowed program participants to express their concerns.

Principal assessments were shared by 7 of the 8 program completers serving as administrators. These assessments were completed at the Region 10 Education Service Center. Documents provided information of the perceptions and talents of each school leader based on observations and studies completed by persons hired by the service center. Once every 5 years each Texas school administrator must complete a principal assessment.

Data Analysis

Data from questionnaires and interviews were analyzed and reported according to qualitative data analysis prescribed by Miles and Huberman (1984, 1994), who suggest use of charts and graphs to add meaning and clarity to qualitative analysis. Narrative text is enhanced by use of spreadsheets and tables for ease in examination of data. Responses from interviews and open-ended questions on questionnaires were analyzed for themes. These themes were compared to questionnaire responses to corroborate answers. Frequencies and percentages were employed for reporting purposes. Findings were reported in narrative format, with charts and tables used to aid in understanding and clarification of findings. Personal quotes from interviewees were included to add to the meaning of findings.

The interviewer asked probing questions to gain information. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest stronger data can be collected during individual interviews or with repeated contact with an individual. Data reported firsthand or collected in an informal setting when the researcher is alone with a program participant is beneficial in providing information that might not be reported when several people are questioned at the same time. Individual interviews were tape-recorded with permission of each program participant and were transcribed by the researcher into a computer document. These findings are discussed in chapter 4.

An Excel spreadsheet was formatted by the researcher for tabulations of yes/no questions, Likert-scaled answers, and factual answers provided by program participants. Demographic and historical information was noted. Answers to open-ended questions were recorded to aid in further investigation of similarities and differences. Data from interview questions was analyzed for emerging themes. Themes emerging from the written data were compared to the themes from the questionnaires. Consolidated findings from all sources of data are reported in chapter 4 with the aid of charts and tables. Personal quotes from interviews are included to refine the meaning of the data collected.

Summary

Chapter 3 includes the presentation of this researcher's case study method, a qualitative research design. The researcher described the selection of participants for the principal-training program along with a discussion of specific instruments used in the collection of data as well as data analysis. Data were collected from questionnaires, interviews, and documents.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This study evaluated the University of North Texas/Dallas Independent School District (UNT/DISD) partnership for educational administrative training after completion of the program by the first cohort of students. The principal preparation program was developed in response to a suggestion from the Southern Regional Education Board for new methods to train future school leaders. The purpose of the study was to ascertain strengths and weaknesses of the program to determine whether the program accomplished its established goals. This chapter includes findings of the study. The first part of the chapter consists of a review of the evaluation study, its purposes, and its methodology. The second part of the chapter contains information about responses from surveys and interviews of the cohort of students. The third part of the chapter contains a review of the research questions of the study and presentation of findings related to each question.

Review of the Study, Its Purposes and Methodology

The UNT/DISD Leadership Development Program was created as a partnership between the University of North Texas and Dallas Independent School District to train school leaders who would make a difference in schools through school improvement and student achievement. The call was for a new breed of school principal. The 2-year principal preparation program began in the fall of 2002 with a cohort of 26 administrative interns from 10 elementary, middle, and high school campuses in Dallas ISD. Interns

were recommended by their building principals, had to meet all admission standards of the Toulouse School of Graduate Studies at UNT, meet all standards of the educational administration program in the UNT College of Education, and complete an interview process with UNT faculty and DISD principals. This study focused on participation in campus-based decision making, how participation in the program affected the interns' perceptions of educational administration and perceptions of involvement in student success. The major research focus was to evaluate the program to highlight both strengths and weaknesses of the program so that needed change could be implemented in the future. Information needed to investigate these research questions was gathered through questionnaires, interviews with interns who had secured administrative positions in Dallas ISD, and an examination of documents pertaining to the program and administrative interns.

Information about Responses and Document Study

A questionnaire (see Appendix B) was created for this study. The researcher obtained a 69% return rate on the questionnaires. Questionnaires were distributed in the Dallas ISD campus mail system with follow-up questionnaires mailed each month to nonrespondents. Telephone call reminders were made. Finally, a lottery was devised to encourage a better response rate; this resulted in the return of one additional questionnaire and one interview.

Interviews were scheduled at the home campus of 8 administrators to offer convenient times and locations to encourage participation.. Only the researcher and participant were present during the interviews so each person was free to express his or

her true thoughts and opinions. The interview sessions were tape recorded to ensure accuracy of data.

Thirteen of the original group of cohort members (50%) secured administrative jobs in Dallas ISD. One person secured an administrative job in a nearby school district. Eight of those administrators who secured jobs in Dallas ISD after completion of the program were interviewed. Five additional interns secured administrative jobs in Dallas ISD, but did not consent to be a part of the present study. Four males and 4 females participated in interviews. Each session lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes, depending on the amount of discussion generated by the administrator. Numerous telephone calls, voice mails, and e-mails were placed to 5 administrators in Dallas ISD and 1 administrator in a neighboring school district who had not responded to requests for information. They were given additional questionnaires and interview times for sessions that might be more convenient for their schedules. None of the parties was able to return a questionnaire or schedule a different time for an interview session. The researcher never located three members of the original cohort group.

One Dallas ISD official involved in staff development for administrators was interviewed at his office concerning the need for qualified principal candidates. The information he provided was invaluable to the researcher. Questions to this interviewee addressed the partnership with Dallas ISD, placement of personnel at various DISD schools, and distribution of consent forms and questionnaires. The interview lasted approximately 2 hours.

Additionally, the researcher reviewed a dissertation (Newman, 2004) completed at the halfway point of the school leadership training program. Results from those

findings were analyzed to understand better the personal growth and educational development of administrative interns. All documents pertaining to the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program were made available to the researcher. Documents were reviewed to develop an understanding of the context of the program in terms of the initial planning decisions. The use of the CIPP design developed by Stufflebeam (Gredler, 1996) was used in evaluation of the program. Goals of the program were assessed as they related to priorities of the partnership between UNT and DISD.

Input-evaluation barriers that inhibited the program were identified. The researcher identified which aspects of the program participants reported as beneficial and which were not beneficial. The process evaluation portion of research focused on modification possibilities for future implementation of the leadership program. The products of the program—the program participants who secured principal certification—were questioned and interviewed to analyze which skills and knowledge they found most useful in their educational practices. Members of the first cohort of students suggested specific ideas for improvements to the leadership development program.

Unpublished surveys (Adkison, 2004) completed by program participants during one of their last classes in May 2004 were reviewed to understand better the thoughts and perceptions of program participants at the end of the 2-year program. Adkison (2004) sought answers regarding 23 competencies of school leaders as well as what content and experiences should comprise principal-training programs. Surveys also showed information related to characteristics of principal preparation programs. Specific concerns and recommendations were requested in this survey.

Examination of Findings

Data from administrative intern questionnaires were entered and tabulated in an Excel spreadsheet. Responses to open-ended questions from questionnaires were recorded. Responses to interview questions were tape recorded, then transcribed into Word documents. Transcribed interview documents and responses to open-ended questions were analyzed to determine themes, similarities, and differences.

In this section, findings are presented for each of the study's research questions:

1. How did participation in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program change the involvement of the administrative interns in campus-based decision making?
2. How has participation in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program changed the ways the administrative interns perceive themselves?
3. What actions have the members of the cohort group taken in their teacher-leader or administrative positions to affect student achievement?
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program partnership from the viewpoint of the program participants?

Findings for each question are presented in chronological order of information; findings are from the questionnaire prepared by this researcher. These findings are followed by data from the interviews of the 8 practicing administrators in Dallas ISD who had secured positions following the principal-training program. Information from principal assessment materials for each of the 8 DISD administrators was also reviewed.

A copy of the questionnaire (Appendix B) prepared by this researcher as well as a copy of questions posed during 8 interviews (Appendix C) are included in this document.

Research Question 1

How did participation in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program change the involvement of the administrative interns in campus-based decision making?

Information supplied by completers of the questionnaire provided insight into concerns of campus-level decision-making opportunities through several questions. Use of a Likert-scale response on a 4-point rating from *none of the time* to *all of the time*, requiring each person to choose a definitive answer, was instrumental in obtaining results.

Nine of the 13 respondents indicated *most of the time*, while 2 gave *all of the time* responses to the university course work being beneficial to school improvement projects. Eleven chose *most of the time* for application of research knowledge to improve school practices, while 2 chose *all of the time*.

One question investigated information concerning university course work perceived beneficial to school improvement projects. The questionnaire contained an area of open-ended responses to identify which specific projects from university coursework were beneficial to school improvement projects (Hart & Pounder, 1999). Some important projects, identified by participants, included:

- Study of the campus improvement plan and analyze data from a different point of view
- Insight into how to evaluate and determine the type of culture in a building and general ideas of how to address it
- How to handle teacher/student discipline management
- Better school morale

- Safer campus
- Better understanding of data

Respondent comments regarding the projects were as follows:

- The one project that I have looked back at was... Unisom where we had to create a 3-year plan for school improvement. In addition, all of the projects that we were allowed to do at our campus were very beneficial such as raising morale, leading committees, and addressing academic achievement.
- I implemented a homework-detention program that I learned at a conference. I also did projects that improved staff morale.

Numbers and percentages were lower when the question concerned being instrumental in working with school personnel in applying research knowledge to improve school practices. Two persons indicated *no* interaction with others in improving schools practices. Seven indicated this happened *some of the time*, and 6 indicated this occurred *most of the time*. Only 1 person indicated this practice *always* occurred in that individual's educational setting (see Table 1).

Table 1

Administrative Intern Questionnaire Regarding Campus-Based Decision Making, Fall 2006

Curriculum and assignment	<u>Numbers and percentages</u>							
	None		Some		Most		All	
My university course work has proven beneficial to school improvement projects,	0	2	15	9	70	2	15	
I apply research knowledge to improve school practices,	0	3	19	11	69	2	12	
I have been instrumental in working with school personnel in applying research knowledge to improve school practices,	2	13	7	43	6	38	1	6

Respondents to the fall 2006 questionnaire indicated varied extracurricular jobs and campus-planning roles at their schools. Noticeable changes had occurred in description and time from previous involvement in May 2004. In addition to the 8 administrators, participants described themselves as a science teacher, lead teacher, biology teacher, grade-level team teacher, and testing/academic coordinator (see Table 2).

Table 2

School Activities/Campus-Based Decision-Making Processes in which Interns Reported Involvement after Participation in UNT/SREB Leadership Development Program, Fall 2006

School Activities/Duties	Campus-Based Decision-Making Processes
3 Assistant principals	21 Century grant
Grade-level team leader	Campus instructional leadership team (CILT)
Science teacher	Campus improvement plan
Testing/academic coordinator	Site-based decision-making team
Principal	Faculty advisory committee
Department head	School budget input
Lead teacher	Hiring teachers
Biology, AP biology teacher	Campus improvement committee
Associate principal	Campus decision-making committee
Teacher	Open forums
Dean of instruction	Giving suggestions
Career investigation teacher	Safety and security

School leaders who had secured administrative jobs were interviewed by this researcher in a variety of schools, in a variety of neighborhoods, all within Dallas ISD. Three women were at elementary schools; 2 were assistant principals, and 1 served as principal. Four members of the group were interviewed at their jobs in middle schools, sometimes referred to as junior high schools or learning centers in DISD. One person served as an assistant principal at a high school (Table 3).

Table 3

Schools of Interviewees, Fall 2006

Level	Numbers and percentages	
Elementary	3	37.5
Middle (Junior high/Learning Center)	4	50.0
High School	1	12.5

Four administrators were male; four were female (Table 4).

Table 4

Gender of Interviewees, Fall 2006

Gender	Numbers and percentages	
Female	4	50
Male	4	50

One person served as an elementary school principal. All other administrators were either assistant principals, associate principals, or had the title of Dean of Instruction. One person was at the high school level as an assistant principal (Table 5).

Table 5

Administrative positions of Interviewees, Fall 2006

Position	Numbers and percentages	
Principal	1	12.5
Assistant principal/associate principal/ Dean of Instruction	7	87.5

The ethnicity of interviewees included 4 African Americans, 2 Mexican Americans, 1 Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1 Caucasian (Table 6).

Table 6

Ethnicity of Administrators, Fall 2006

Ethnicity	Numbers and percentages	
African American	4	50.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	12.5
Mexican American	2	25.0
White	1	12.5

In order to understand the situation better in which each administrator worked, questions were asked about the culture of the school, student population, and the working situation of each person. There was a variety of situations. One school was approximately 50% African American and 50% Hispanic, with the majority of the students classified as at risk. Students were from single-parent homes or were raised by a relative or

grandparent. Another school was housed in a 2-year-old building in a more affluent area of DISD. Two other schools were in established neighborhoods in DISD, were not new, but were well maintained with positive slogans posted throughout the building. One school had been in a state of turmoil until the present administration arrived. The administrator described the school culture as unstable but evolving. In the past, there had been student walkouts, coupled with many veteran teachers retiring. One school was in a commercial district of Dallas; students were bused to the campus from 2 miles away. The make-up of the student body was 22% African American, 68% Hispanic, 8% Asian, and 2% other (students from Bosnia, India, and Africa). One new school was in the highest crime area of Dallas. Another school was near the center of Dallas, near Fair Park, in an established neighborhood.

During the interview process, each administrator was questioned about his or her involvement in campus-based decisions. Each person interviewed had participated in the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) training during coursework at UNT. Some indicated they participated in training their staff for their particular campus, although teachers in DISD attend a 2-day off-campus training for the instrument. Teachers new to the building were trained at some of the campuses, but not all. All interviewees indicated involvement in appraising teachers on their campuses. At each campus, the building principal decides how to divide the staff and determines who will observe which teachers, although all interviewed administrators indicated they were in and out of all classrooms in their building. Some administrators indicated they evaluated certain teachers based on the administrator's particular area of expertise (ex. Bilingual or ESL) or content area or department, while others evaluated teachers by grade level. Some

faculties are divided for appraisals by alphabet and/or number (whether they number an even or an odd on the personnel records). Three of the administrators shared they had been more involved in personnel situations than teacher evaluations.

Those 3 were involved in nonrenewal situations with members of their staffs. Some placed teachers on growth plans because those teachers were in need of assistance. Each of the nonrenewal or termination situations was described as necessary in order to provide the best education for students. The process had been long for each administrator, from 1 to 3 years. Administrators felt confident they had handled each situation the best way they could, according to their training and use of documentation. Participants indicated they used a resource from the leadership development class to aid them in their situation.

Administrators indicated they, along with other administrators on their campus, did things specifically to boost morale of their staff. Some things were decided by the Campus Site-based Decision Making Committee or CILT, rather than solely by campus administrators. Situations ranged from friendly telephone calls to treats for the staff to complimentary notes and recognition for perfect attendance for each 6 weeks. Teachers were encouraged to share dynamic lessons with other members of the staff. This empowerment of teachers because of administrative influence is an example of a group consensus opportunity. Teachers met with their grade levels or departments to discuss issues and concerns or to vent when needed. Open-ended surveys were used for planning at CILT meetings. They celebrated successes as suggested by Whitaker (2003). Some school leaders provided a special breakfast or lunch or allowed teachers to leave early. Very powerful was a principal's decision to allow his teachers to make choices to

influence his decisions. At one school, each administrator wrote positive notes to a teacher. Some schools encouraged teachers to get together off campus for bowling and similar activities. One school gave teachers a comp day for doing a good job with their students or extra pay through the Title 1 funds for taking part in Saturday school (an extra tutorial session) for students. Ideas from these administrators were in line with the literature reviewed as research has shown that teachers who are empowered to make decisions can be successful and have ownership of the achievement of students when they serve under a new breed of principal.

All administrators, except one, indicated they were presently involved in campus decision making. The one exception served on the school committee last year. All indicated they worked on the campus improvement plan with other committee members from their schools. They reported they are more engaged in campus planning than in previous years when they were classroom teachers.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, How has participation in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program changed the ways the administrative interns perceive themselves?

Answers to various questions on the survey provided information on the subject. Twelve respondents indicated the program supported rigorous academic standards and instructional methods that both motivated and engaged them *most of the time*. Four interviewees stated they were motivated and engaged all *of the time*. Respondents indicated specific aspects and experiences of the program beneficial to their knowledge of leadership and acquisition of skills. Relationship with the mentor principal and panel

discussions with other mentor principals were beneficial and motivational to 1 respondent. Also encouraging to 1 participant were group projects. The respondent said, “We could learn from each others’ experiences. Our group came from so many different backgrounds that you could not help but learn from each other.”

Members of the group did not share the same feeling of pressure to secure an administrative position because of participation in the program. Six of the group indicated they felt *no* pressure to become an administrator. This finding supports the Hayward (2004) research discussed in chapter 2. Three felt *some* pressure, while only 1 felt pressured to do so. Six of the participants felt pressure from the beginning of the program to secure an administrative job.

As far as projects assigned and completed on campus during the program, 1 person did not receive cooperation from teachers and staff. Four persons received *some* cooperation from teachers and staff; 9 received cooperation *most of the time*. Only 1 person indicated *total* cooperation from teachers and staff when a field-based project was initiated at that individual’s school. In terms of administrators’ cooperation when participants initiated field-based projects or incorporated something newly learned in one of the classes, the findings included: 2 *none of the time*; 3 *some of the time*; 7 *most of the time*, and 4 *all of the time*.

Regarding the faculty’s receptiveness to new ideas transferred from the university classroom to the school setting, findings indicated: 7 *some of the time*, 7 *most of the time*, and 2 *all of the time*. Leadership principles and receptivity to principles occurred at this frequency: 1 *none of the time*, 7 *some of the time*, 6 *most of the time*, and 2 *all of the time*.

The principals' receptivity to new ideas and to receptivity to different leadership principles appeared to be similar. Both receptivity to new ideas and receptivity to different leadership principles 2 rated *none of the time*, and 3 rated *some of the time*. Receptivity to new ideas showed 9 persons *most of the time* and different leadership principles 10 *most of the time*. Principals' receptivity to new ideas showed 2 persons rating it *all of the time*. Only 1 participant rated the principals' receptivity to different leadership principles *all of the time*. Ultimately, data showed after participation in the principal leadership program, 8 persons learned more about their personal leadership style. Two of the cohort members expressed some confidence in assuming a school leadership position because of participation in the program. Nine persons had confidence to a greater degree. Five members of the group gained great confidence in their leadership abilities because of participation in the UNT/DISD program. Five indicated some perception changes. Three of the group members changed *most* of their perceptions, and 8 had perceptions of educational leadership change *completely* (see Table 7).

Table 7

Administrative Intern Questionnaire Regarding Ways they Perceive Themselves, Fall 2006

Ways cohort members perceive themselves	None		Some		Most		All	
I think the program supported rigorous academic standards and instructional methods that motivate and engage me.	0		0		12	75%	4	25%
I think there is a great pressure to secure an administrative position because of my participation in the program.	6	38%	3	18%	1	6%	6	38%
I receive cooperation from teachers and staff in my school when I initiate a field-based project or incorporate something new learned in one of my classes	1	7%	4	27%	9	59%	1	7%
The faculty at school is receptive to new ideas transferred from my university classroom to our workplace.	0		7	31%	7	31%	2	38%
The faculty at school is receptive to different leadership principles transferred from my university classroom to our workplace.	1	6%	7	44%	6	38%	2	12%
The principal at school is receptive to new ideas transferred from my university classroom to our workplace.	2	12%	3	19%	9	57%	2	12%

Table 7 (*continued*)

Ways cohort members perceive themselves	None		Some		Most		All	
The principal at school is receptive to different leadership principles transferred from my university classroom to our workplace.	2	12%	3	19%	10	63%	1	6%
After participation in the program, I have learned more about my personal leadership style.	0		4	25%	4	25%	8	50%
My confidence in assuming leadership positions has increased because of participation in the program.	0		2	12%	9	56%	5	32%
Participation in the program changed the way I perceive the world of educational leadership.	0		5	31%	3	19%	8	50%

Interns were in agreement with the enormous job responsibilities of a public school principal as discussed by Hopkins (2003). Self-perception was apparent as respondents struggled to explain their thoughts. Notably, with the exception of 2 of the 8 individuals, their personal struggles with job-related problems were also where they were the weakest in their principal assessments. Principal assessments are instruments that every administrator must complete once every 5 years. Area service centers usually provide assessments to school administrators within their regions of Texas. The assessment instrument is shared solely with the administrator who has been assessed and does not have to be shared with anyone else. Members of this group of administrators

were gracious in allowing this researcher to review their assessment documentation completed at Region 10 Education Service Center.

Answers varied, ranging from time management, to expectations of teachers, to bookwork, to accountability, to student behavior, to attitudes of adults and students, to a lack of certain knowledge for the job (see Table 8).

Table 8

Administrative Intern Interviews Problems Faced as an Administrator, Fall 2006

Problems

Day is too short.
 Classroom management skills with teachers
 Maintaining a safe campus
 Crisis plan and carrying it out
 Emergency preparedness
 TAKS scores
 Students staying focused due to troubled homes
 Time management
 Trying to get it all done. Multi-tasking
 Communication because our systems are not in place (at this new school)
 Complacency
 Leadership isn't being utilized
 Discipline due to generational poverty and violence and students who attack teachers and students who beat each other up and lack of parental support.
 Changing the teachers and what they think of the kids
 We have to contend with peer pressure (among students).
 Too much work-textbooks, discipline, test coordinator, scheduling
 I don't know too much about the Student Code of Conduct. We didn't get that in that cohort. What's suspension? What's the procedure? Procedures in AEP? That whole thing on student discipline

Other interview questions provided the opportunity to express self perception feelings: Interviewees were asked, In your career as an educator, have you made the most impact on students as an administrator or as a teacher? How did you impact your students? The answers proved to be surprising to the researcher. Three interviewees

answered they had the most impact on students as an administrator; 2 acknowledged a different kind of impact in each of the two situations. However, 3 of the interviewed assistant principals thought their greatest impact was with students as a classroom teacher (Table 9). This was surprising to the researcher because it seems persons would choose to work in the area where they perceive the most satisfaction. If their greatest impact was at the classroom level, it seems they would choose to remain in the classroom to maintain those relationships with students they indicated they valued.

Table 9

Administrative Intern Interviews Vocation with Impact on Students, Fall 2006

Vocation	Numbers and percentages	
Administrator	3	37.5
Teacher	3	37.5
Different impact in each position	2	25.0

Other interviewee comments included:

- My principal pulled me out of the classroom. She wanted me to help other teachers...I fought her and told her... 'I can't. You can't do that to me.' ...She told me '...think about it. You're impacting 22 kids in your classroom. You're about to impact third and fourth grade with nine sections of each class. You're going to make such a big difference.' ...So a bigger impact campus wide.

- As a teacher, I knew the names of every student that was in my classroom. And I knew a little something about them. And so it feels that I had more impact on students as a teacher, but I know that I've had more as an administrator.
- I'd probably have to say as a teacher because I was coach as well so I was in the lives of a lot of young people in terms of spending more hours with them during school, after school, and having to take them home...I get letters back... they say they miss me or thanks for this.
- You know, that's a good question. I think I have had an impact in both areas...I try to win my students over with love. You know to let them know, 'Hey, I care about you. I care about not just school but I care about you.' And that's what I do as an administrator as well.... And that's how I've always been in the classroom as well as an administrator.
- I would say I have made a different type of impact on students as an administrator and as a teacher. I think administrators do make an impact, but it's indirect through the teachers to the building climate. For me right now, being an administrator is like being a shepherd.

Answers reflect self satisfaction that administrators receive from their present job assignments. It is clear some miss the close relationships they had with individual students. New administrators indicated they were in charge of the whole student body, but missed the interaction and fraternization with individual students. They presently did not have time to spend with individual students as they had in the past when serving as a classroom teacher or a coach.

Part of the research study involved looking at principal assessment documentation instruments for each person interviewed. Seven of the 8 administrators had completed their assessments at the Region 10 Education Service Center; one of the persons interviewed had his scheduled for March 2007. Respondents perceived strengths as noted in the assessment instruments included: presentations in front of an audience, willing and capable of handling difficult situations, knowledge of curriculum and instruction, ability to go from one situation to another, and awareness of instructional needs (budget).

One administrator said of his assessment, “Mine suggested (I call myself a fireman, and it’s true)—wherever the crisis is, that’s where I want to be. I’ve done that. I’ve actually had to do that.”

Administrators did not always agree with their individual assessments. Most weaknesses showed up as difficulties in staying abreast of new legislation, awareness of curriculum, and awareness of special education laws. One person said, “Things I felt I was weak in, they didn’t agree in, so that was interesting.”

Yet another said, “It was very surprising to be honest with you. I didn’t agree with some of the things. The way they had me was this way and I thought I was more this way... Some things I did agree with. It was kinda eye opening on some things. It made me know I needed to work on some things.”

The most important question posed during the interviews concerning the administrators’ perception of themselves was, “In the program developed by the University of North Texas and Dallas ISD, the focus was on the suggestion by the Southern Regional Education Board to develop a new breed of principal (Bottoms & O’Neill, 2001). Do you see yourself as a new breed of principal?”

- Absolutely. And I see it and I can almost tell they had another program through another university. I think North Texas has the best program just because I see those other ones now... it gave us more insight as far as just if I were to go through the master's program on my own. I think this provided more of a real world experience because the professors really wanted us to see these parts... I think it was more of a well-rounded situation... the professors, they would speak directly to us about DISD. I don't know if someone's gone outside of DISD now, but it was really preparing us for what was to come... I don't think we could have gotten a better deal than what we got.
- I don't think so much about the breed; I think it's up to each person...Not breed-just individuals.
- I don't think it's a new breed of principal; it's just one person who is dedicated to not being as he is or as she is but being able to swing from community to community...Different communities call for different things. It's not a new breed of principal. It's just one who is willing and able...
- I felt like I do think a little bit differently than someone who didn't go through the program... Even my principal, when I was going through the program, said, 'You are really getting things that I didn't get when I went through my program. I wish I had gone through something like that.' He said I think a little bit differently and he said, 'I'm learning from you.' So that was good to hear. He was very honest, 'You are really getting some good stuff.' ...I guess we're a different type of breed of principal.

Program participants were satisfied in training they received to become a new

breed of principal through the UNT/DISD program.. They acknowledged information they had of other training programs and realized they were fortunate to have been a cohort member of this program. They learned essentials skills to create a climate to positively affect students by leading their staff members to collaborate for the achievement of their students.

An assistant principal answered:

- I certainly do (see myself as a new breed of principal) because...I think that old referred to principals that simply just held school...just to make sure that all the students were in class...that the learning is the responsibility of the teachers. Make sure that buses are there, everybody's got books and lockers and the operation of the school is smooth. I think the new breed focuses more on instructional leadership. I believe that's what the cohort was preparing us for—to be instructional leaders, not just building operators. And so I would say, "Yes that I am certainly not where I should be or where I'd like to be, but I'm certainly headed toward what the new breed of administrators should look like."

In answer to the question, one said:

- When you compare us to some of those that are more veterans, you know—just kind of hanging out, and not understanding...We're teachers on our campus; we're teachers' teachers. So, yeah, it's a whole new breed; it's very different.

A very succinct answer to the question was the following:

- I would like to consider myself that... I understand the administrative end of it ...How everyone's responsibility leads to the same thing, which is student achievement. So when you say new breed, I think the new breed factor may be

not so much in discipline all the time, but trying to figure out what makes for a positive school climate. How can we get the kids to take more ownership?

Because in so many buildings, the principal holds the reins tight. They want to try to dictate everything that takes place. But as you become an administrator you try to develop leaders under you and allow them to take over certain roles and certain leadership responsibilities, thereby broadening their horizons and allowing them to have more of an impact upon what actually takes place in the building. So it's learning how to let go and not have to be that dictator-type individual. And that's what I'm seeing from people that have gone through the program. They really and truly understand that the principal is just one cog. It takes all these little cogs to get the job done. And not having to have total control over everything. That's the difference that I see... I know the principal is responsible for everything that takes place in the building, but within that it's learning to trust and delegate responsibility and trust those people you have under you, to fulfill their roles in the big picture of things.

Program participants indicated their willingness to look at data, plan, obtain necessary resources, and receive information from fellow staff members to advance student achievement at their schools. They were satisfied to be considered a new breed of principal.

This researcher asked a question about a contemporary issue during interviews conducted with 8 administrators in Dallas ISD. Program participants were asked to respond to how they might have handled a newsworthy situation differently than a principal in a nearby school district handled it (Appendix C, Question 5). Two of the

interviewees had no responses since they did not know the issue. The question caused each person to reflect on his or her communication style, and to consider how to communicate sensitive material in this age of accountability in education. The answer to this question is a partial answer to research question 3, although it was a hypothetical situation for each participant.

Research Question 3

What actions have the members of the cohort group taken in their teacher-leader/administrative positions to affect student achievement?

Answers were varied in their explanations. All agreed dissemination of test scores should be done with sensitivity to the audience. Actions noted were:

- Using the data last year, ... we said, ‘What’s going on? Let’s talk about this. Do you realize that you’ve never passed a math and reading test?’ ... We gave him a mentor; he was one of those kids we just started developing a relationship with. At the end of the year he passed everything...He said, ‘No one ever told me I could do it.’
- Use maybe an AEIS report and supply that to parents and to the teachers and to students... I think that the principal has to be aware of how that comes across and how that could affect the climate and culture.
- Probably one-on-one...each individual kid...bringing them in, talking with their parents, ... That would have probably been the best thing...

Former interns also noted during their interviews that technology did help them with their jobs. One person indicated he used technology to manage instruction *some of the time*. Seven used technology *most of the time*, and 8 used technology exclusively to

manage instruction. Three of the respondents indicated they were instrumental in enabling students to meet high standards *some of the time*. Nine accomplished this *most of the time* while 4 enabled students to meet high standards *continuously*. Program participants indicated they knew how to look at data, to be consistent with discipline, and to know where students were in their knowledge base at all times. Members of the cohort group indicated that by possessing a thorough knowledge of curriculum and professional development appraisal standards, they were instrumental in accelerating student achievement.

One cohort member served as campus reading specialist while in the UNT/DISD program. In addition to working with teachers, she worked with struggling third and fourth grade students on reading and writing. She designed lessons to address their individual needs. One person was instrumental in changing perceptions of people at school (teachers of students, students of teachers, and students of themselves) in order for the school to be successful. Steps were taken to ensure academic rigor, raise expectations of students, devote more time on task, and use higher order thinking exercises that enabled students to meet or exceed state mandated testing requirements as Whitaker (2003) suggested. A special attempt was made to protect teachers' instructional time by avoiding classroom interruptions and unnecessary paperwork. Additionally, use of learning contracts where students maintained their own progress profiles and set their own goals empowered students to take responsibility for their own learning. Cohort members began special programs for student and parent participation.

School-to-home communication was reported to be consistent and meaningful, especially by 1 administrative intern. Some schools hosted a "meet the teacher" night or a

“math fest” night or parent-teacher association (PTA) meetings to encourage parents and teacher to meet together. One school began a Saturday school and reconnect program to encourage students to continue to strive for academic success. Class members showed parents and teachers how they could get students to reach a high level of success through proper study and organizational skills. One member of the class conducted workshops and a book study on differentiated instruction.

Class members thought they were instrumental in enabling teachers to have high expectations of all students at different rates, which confirms what was reported earlier by Copland (2004), Norton (2003), and Rost (1991). One person indicated this *never* happened for him; 5 believed this happened *some of the time*. Nine completers of the questionnaire indicated this happened *most of the time*, and only 1 knew this happened *all the time*. It is unclear as to whether the 6 who reported being unsuccessful at enabling faculty and teachers to have high expectation of students thought that way because of lack of effort or lack of cooperation from fellow staff members. Those who were successful at the attempt suggested reasons and activities that made this happen.

Illustrative comments included:

- Presentation and sharing of experiences from conferences and workshops to empower teachers to motivate and evaluate student performance.
- Lead by example. I think I had the biggest impact on the grades that I worked with. As a campus leader, my principal allowed me to do professional development for the faculty with a focus on student achievement.

- I was allowed to do science trainings for the whole school—TAKS testing, meeting with grade-level teachers discussing data and objectives that needed to be covered.
- Ensured... content areas for sixth grade subjects as department team leader at my school.
- Data analysis of student performance.
- Staff development sessions on inclusion and differentiated instruction.
- Through proper profiling and connection with the students on a personal level, we showed the teachers how they can get kids to a higher level.
- Being the department chair, I am able to model good teaching and give feedback to those who need more direction in the classroom.

Program participants indicated a great sense of readiness with 12 responding *most of the time*, and 4 responding affirmatively to *all of the time*, to participation in the leadership readiness program helping them gain insight into how goals of their school could be achieved. Several years have passed from initial completion of the program to the present.

Half of the program participants have not secured administrative positions to date, which may account for the answer to the item (My administrative role allowed me to make contributions to student achievement at my campus). Responses to that statement were as follows: 2 *none of the time*, 5 *some of the time*, 5 *most of the time*, and 4 *all of the time*. Of the 15 responders to the questionnaire, all had completed the Master's of Education degree from the University of North Texas and held Texas principal certification. None hope to continue teaching in the future. Fourteen hope to be

administrators and 4 hope to work as members of the central office staff. Eight are currently serving as administrators; 8 are not.

The questionnaire also provided insight into these administrators' contributions:

- My talent and knowledge are wasted (from a nonadministrator).
- I did a review of student data and analysis of information to help develop the campus improvement plan.
- As a member of the leadership team on my campus, I was able to work closely with my principal. The leadership team made most of the decisions about campus initiatives and how to implement district initiatives.
- I did science trainings and TAKS testing. I met with grade levels to discuss data and obtain information. I also set up lunches and games as well as drawings for the staff to improve their morale.
- I structured the school-wide tutoring plan to include student profiling and assessment on a weekly basis. This allowed me to work with parent groups and give home support for student academics.
- I am always analyzing data and looking at individual teacher records and targeting certain students or situations.
- I have a better understanding of curriculum and testing. I have helped my students better understand the objectives. Therefore, we have better test scores.
- I have conducted TAKS nights for parents and staff development.

Numbers are low in answer to the statement (My administrative role allowed me to make contributions to a personal, caring school environment that helps students meet higher standards) because not everyone has secured an administrative position. Numbers

and percentages were returned as 2 scoring *none of the time*, 5 *some of the time*, 7 *most of the time*, and 2 *all of the time*.

The contributions the members of the cohort group made to student achievement to improve quality in their schools mirrored those suggested by Drucker (2205), Petrie (1990), and Laboratory (2005). Answers that illustrate the percentages in Table 10 include:

- We have increased student achievement on standardized tests.
- Part of our focus was to enhance morale at the school. One of the big projects that we did was to create different activities to build camaraderie and overall positive school climate.
- I think I assisted in it becoming more of one (a successful school) than it was initially.
- As an administrator, my personal habits in relationships with others have served as a role model for the staff as well as students.
- School cleanliness.
- I set up field trips that introduce students to things they have not experienced.
- I work with teachers on instruction. I give demos in classes, help teachers interpret assessment data to then help them drive their instruction.

Table 10

Administrative Intern Interviews Actions that Affect Student Achievement, Fall 2006

Action	None		Some		Most		All	
Technology to manage instruction	0		1	6%	7	44%	8	50%
Enabling students to meet high standards	0		3	19%	9	56%	4	25%
Enabling faculty and teachers to have high expectations of all students	1	6%	5	31%	9	57%	1	6%
Gained insight into how the goals of my school can be achieved	0		0		12	75%	4	25%
Make contributions to student achievement at my campus	2	13%	5	31%	5	31%	4	25%
Make contributions to a personal, caring school environment that helps students meet higher standards	2	13%	5	31%	7	43%	2	13%

This researcher asked two questions concerning student data during the interviews with 8 DISD administrators. Do you use data to plan for student success? If so, how do you use the data you gather for your students? As anticipated, everyone used data from the many benchmark tests given during the school year. Because DISD is a large urban district, data are generated from the research department and the central office using the Dallas Collaborative Model. Interviewees reported:

- We use a lot of data analysis to plan and identify kids in need and to be able to intercede. It's part of our campus improvement plan—to use the data to decide what's going to be the best for our campus.

- When we have a kid that has a regular problem with discipline, we will use his academic performance as a springboard to discuss his behavior. We ask them to come up with a plan as to how they're going to correct that particular situation. We do consult the data. Especially when we look at profiles, prior years, current years, any benchmark testing we have done. We look at that constantly.
- At this point in DISD, using data is a district initiative. Our veteran teachers...are adept at it. We just gave benchmarks. ...the teachers will be going over data, and once again I will make a presentation on how to pull out what you need and what to do with it in a timely and efficient manner of teaching.
- Our teachers build their tutoring on that information. They build their lesson plans on that. ...We have forms that they have to fill out concerning areas, because we are trying to get to exemplary.
- I really feel like this year the district is really moving towards researched-based.
- We're going to disaggregate the data from those benchmark scores. ...we constantly monitor that data... and kids wear their white T-shirt with a star on it. You get to wear it and everyone wants to wear it to be on Team Success.

Hallinger and Heck (1998) assert that there is an indirect effect on student achievement by building administrators. Interviewees were asked to judge the veracity of that finding in their own experiences. Their responses included:

- We're trying to be very visible, especially in the classrooms. We're just having a presence.

- I wouldn't use the word indirect. I would say it directly affects, would be my opinion.
- The culture of our school is...very strong...parents, staff, everybody wants to be here. This is a great school. We have a strong school. We are just an inch from being exemplary.
- Yes, because we are the ones who have the influence on the teachers.
- I think we are really doing everything that we can and it's good to see the support from other people...
- Our goal is if the kids in Highland Park can do it, then our kids can do it, too. ...I have 3 goals. Develop master teachers that can be experts at what they do. ...I'm really trying to highlight the good things that our kids do. ...the commitment that they know I'm very committed and my teachers...

Research Question 4

The last research question asked, "What are the strengths and weaknesses of the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program partnership from the viewpoint of the program participants?"

Questionnaire responses provided information to answer that question.

Concerning field-based projects required to complete university coursework and the direct relationship of those to real-world problems at school, 2 individuals determined that happened *some of the time*. Nine indicated it was a good match *most of the time*, and 5 saw the direct relationship *all of the time*. These findings support the work of Kolb (1984), Terenzini, Springer, and Pascarella (1993) and Vygotsky (1978). Field-based problems noted by participants included:

- Development of Campus Improvement Plan
- TAKS data analysis
- Discipline management
- The everyday running of our at-risk program
- School climate and culture activities were very much connected to issues involving my assigned campus
- Supervision
- Presentations made me comfortable
- Addressing large groups
- Mock school projects addressing long term goals and addressing change
- Implementation of district initiatives
- Coping with change
- State mandated PE requirements
- Staffing and scheduling (used faculty surveys and collaborative study group)
- Craft elective teacher schedules to enable them to tutor one period per day in TAKS subjects
- Improving student performance in reading and math
- School morale, discipline, safer school, and laws
- Parents that do not speak English
- We had actual projects that related to things that I actually do in the school right now.
- We came up with a tutoring program for our struggling students that we did not have before.

- I was fortunate to have a principal who let me be very involved. Had I not have had that I don't think the program would have been as effective.

Participants also gave specific aspects and experiences of the preparation program beneficial to leadership knowledge and skills acquisition, as suggested in the review of literature in chapter 2 (Maxwell, 2004; Murphy, 2002; O'Banion, 1997). They included:

- The part that dealt with the appraisal system, with budget, and with creating a climate for change
- Having a mentor principal who really exposed me to the behind-the-scenes... of a principal
- Education law
- Dr. Murphy's classes
- Thorough study of NCLB requirements
- School culture
- PDAS certification
- School finance
- Developing a Campus Improvement Plan
- Using data to make decisions
- Working directly with campus leadership
- Educational law
- Diversity
- Working directly with the principal on issues of budget and construction issues
- Attendance at the Austin conference and UNT conference gave much needed insight into educational issues such as funding, curriculum and instruction

- The actual project requirements at the school were the most beneficial.
- The class had wonderful conversations!
- The program gave us the core knowledge to begin entry-level school administrator duties.
- Bringing in principals from other schools to give real-world situations was helpful.
- I felt that all aspects of the program were very beneficial.
- I learned something every day.
- All our classes involved something that was needed for a leadership role.

An open-ended question inquired about specific aspects and experiences of the program that were not beneficial to leadership knowledge and skill acquisition. Several areas emerged:

- School finance
- Special programs
- Staff development.

Other comments made in this open-ended question included:

- The focus of the program was curriculum and not real issues such as discipline, budget, etc.
- The “organizational” class was totally unnecessary.
- Multiculturalism (Dr. Hudson)-although the information was necessary, the daily log of activities made the class too rushed and crammed for knowledge retention.

- School law could have been more extensive. We needed more cases to research and decisions to discuss.
- The resource (financial and human) class did not make much sense at the time.

In answer to the question of ample resource materials during the leadership development program, class members had mixed experiences. One indicated this happened *some of the time*; 6 said this happened *most of the time*; and 9 indicated this happened *all of the time*. In answer to ample financial resources provided during the program, numbers were more diverse. Five indicated this occurred *some time*, while 9 said it occurred *most of the time*, and only 2 said this happened *all of the time*.

A question was asked if there was ample time to complete coursework assignments during the leadership development class. One person indicated there was *never* time for this, and 1 indicated this happened *some of the time*. Eight of the class members thought this happened *most of the time*, and 6 indicated there was *always* ample time for assignment completion. As far as there being adequate help available from relationships with people (teachers, administrators, coworkers, etc.), an important aspect of a training program according to Maxwell (2004), 8 of the group indicated this occurred *most of the time*; the same number indicated it occurred *all of the time* (Table 11).

Table 11

Administrative Intern Interviews Strengths and Weaknesses of the UNT/DISD/SREB Partnership, Fall 2006

Strengths/ Weakness	None		Some		Most		All	
Field-based projects relating to school	0		2	13%	9	56%	5	31%
Ample resource materials	0		1	6%	6	44%	9	50%
Ample financial resources	0		5	31%	9	56%	2	13%
Ample time for coursework assignments	1	6%	1	6%	8	50%	6	38%
Adequate help from relationships with teachers, administrators, and co-workers	0		0		8	50%	8	50%

Suggestions to improve the leadership development program included:

- More commitment of the principals
- Allow time for true internship
- Hiring participants in this district in administrative positions when vacancies are available
- Action research project was not useful
- Better communication between the directors of the program and the principals of the schools where the cohort members are so the students can get a thorough sense of the *actual* experiences of a school administrator

- Full and accurate disclosure of course requirements, time-lines, and financial aspects should be made prior to the beginning of the program
- Spanish language training.

Other heartfelt comments from the group for improvements included:

- The major problem that I had when I came to this position is I didn't know...the student code of conduct. We didn't get that in the cohort. What's suspension? What's the procedure? That was where I had the problem the most.
- They should set up a program where all participants get placed. I graduated in 2004 and I know I am very qualified and capable, but I still haven't gotten a placement. In this district it's not what you know; it's who you know.
- It would have helped to have more on data analysis, not only how to read the data but also how to interpret it and make sound decisions from it.
- Not cramming so much in, in a short period of time. The program tended to forget that we were still working full time, too, and had major responsibilities at school.
- If a project is assigned, the directors of the program should be responsible for insisting the principal's participate—not the cohort members (conflict of interest as they are the cohort members' bosses).
- The cohort members need time off to “shadow” principals other than their own to see different leadership styles.
- I think there should be more of a concerted effort to place the cohort members in an administrative position upon completion of the program.

- Participants should be actual administrative interns on campus. Teaching classes while going through the program did not allow me to focus on either teaching or internship.
- If we are going to be in these programs, there should be more of a guarantee of administrative positions. Basically, the program did nothing for me, and I had to leave Dallas to get a more leadership type position. Very sad.

The question of knowledge and skills gained that are most helpful in daily educational practices resulted in the following answers:

- Knowledge of the law
- Working with integrity
- Knowing how to approach change in the school
- How to recognize a bad culture and how to go about trying to change it
- Knowledge of proper functioning of Texas public schools from an administrative position as well as instructional point of view (ex. School law and curriculum development)
- Dealing with problems at school and solving issues that arise
- Implementing best instructional practices
- PDAS
- NCLB knowledge
- Being sensitive to the needs of all stakeholders
- Maintaining a healthy school climate
- Coaching exercise
- Law class and documentation

- Data analysis
- The connection and alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- Using research to guide instruction
- Diversity

Participants also responded with these issues:

- I think we were prepared to come in and play an instrumental role in anybody's school. Of the people I know that have been assigned, I think everybody has been successful. We still stay in touch...you didn't feel like you were going through it by yourself. When you thought, 'Hey man, this ain't for me. I'm going to give up on this,' there was somebody to kind of push you on and urge you on and encourage you. We developed a whole lot more relationships and networks. Because none of us is assigned to the same school...we are getting a chance to see what is taking place in DISD as a whole, from one area to the next. So, it was a unique experience and I would tell anybody it was worth the investment.
- I think one of the best things was that we had to do so many presentations...being comfortable doing PowerPoint or presenting—that was a good thing about the program...it was another very powerful thing that they got us used to getting up in front of people and talking and being critiqued...on what you did good or you didn't do good.
- All the coursework was beneficial but above that, I learned the most from my mentor principal. She was open to sharing her thinking behind certain decisions.

It opened my eyes to look at things on a broader scale. It helped me be able to see things as an administrator versus a teacher.

- I can't think of one particular thing in general, because so much of it was so helpful.
- I learned some different strategies from conferences I attended.

A question was posed to each person interviewed concerning the internship portion of the program. This question was asked due to the numerous responses concerning the internship on the questionnaires that preceded the interviews. The question was, "Should more time be spent during the administrative preparation program as an intern and less time spent doing coursework?"

One response was "Just do an internship (similar to what other programs do)." Another was "We ... shadowed the principal...just one day. ...it would have been great if we had been assigned ... a semester to a principal just to learn more." Another responded, "Our internship was divided up over the 2 years, so it wasn't a separate course. ...they explained it to us. At the end of the 2 years we had a portfolio where we had to cover all the domains of the things we had done on campus...a lot of them (other program participants) didn't get to do all the things that they were supposed to because they weren't allowed to."

A thoughtful respondent said, "I don't think less time doing coursework, but I think they (program participants) should be out of the teaching program. I had an elementary principal. That's who I shadowed. I would have also liked to have a day to shadow an administrator at middle school and...high school, as would everybody else."

Another explained, “The plan of the program...was for us to intern while we were on campuses. But it’s up to the principal that you are working for if they are going to allow you to actually do hands-on stuff.” Another said, “I would say more time spent as an intern. ...you really learn ... by doing. ...I think it would be very difficult if you just had all the theory but no practical applications.” Another offered,

- I think more time in internship would definitely be fine, because a lot of times the book stuff is good, but...when you’re in the trenches it’s a whole different ballgame. You’ve got to think fast, ...there’s always stuff coming up. You know the term multitasking? You’ve got to be real good at it. Time management and multi-tasking.

Another question posed to program participants during interviews concerning strengths and weakness of the program was “What in the UNT/DISD/SREB leadership development program needs to be eliminated?” Responses were the following:

- I think all of it was very important...finances, with Dr. Brooks—he was very good, but I wish they would have talked more about budget instead of finances... I would have preferred something more like taking a budget at the campus than the state level.
- Everything I got out of North Texas was practical. I would not eliminate a thing that we went through and that we had to do.
- My assistant principal went through the other cohort—the one year UTA cohort, and when we’ve compared stories, she didn’t receive nearly the preparation that we did...everything that we did through UNT, every course that we took, we had

to come back and do something on it in class...I fell like that's what prepared me.

- I think everything was productive because I think back on those classes a lot...I have a file right here...those classes were crucial—all of them.
- I didn't really think that...the resources class was very effective, but I don't think that I can say...take this class out of the curriculum, out of the plan.
- The hardest part was we had to do an action research. That was hard because of the time...It was right at the end and you were trying to graduate and I was rushed. If they could not do...that little part, it would probably be best...that part was rough.
- I don't know about eliminated, but I know some good people that were in that class, ...and I can kind of reflect back on the things that we did and the skills that...some people brought back to the table...They did good jobs and I kind of feel real bad about that because I think we lose a good resource. I know we lost a couple because they moved out of the district...if there were a greater partnership or greater obligation—promissory note signed saying that...they would have jobs.

An interview question asked what was missing in the school-leader training program. Would more training on the use of data be beneficial to the program? This question was posed as a result of findings on the questionnaire. Responses were varied:

- Just student code of conduct
- Budgeting

- Doing a budget is just overwhelming...I think in order to go onto my next level of being a principal that is an area that I really want to focus on so maybe the professors at North Texas can emphasize the importance of really getting in there and learning that budget thing...The budget class and the professor did a great job...I think that when you've not been on this side of the fence you don't realize that's really an important factor in school.
- Our principal was a real good mentor as far as she gave us access to pick her brain as to how she did things and why she did things...a lot of other people in the cohort, they didn't have that relationship with their principal to allow them to do those kinds of things. I would wish that everybody had the experiences that I had...
- One of the things that was missing, that I believe had been added, ...I think in the present program people are not teaching, but are administrative interns on campus...at the time...we were all still teachers. Principals viewed us and used us as administrative interns...when you're with your colleagues, they know you're a teacher. Some of them are very supportive...Others were very jealous...they really didn't care that you had to do lesson plans and you still were responsible for the same things they were. And some just resented the whole thing.
- To do a true internship...we didn't have the full opportunities to take those other classes and apply it in an educational setting as an administrator...

- It was a pretty tight-knit group. We worked well together...I felt like I really got a good education. I didn't feel like I was cheated or nothing. Everything was a challenge...they pushed us.
- With them always dividing us up, you had to learn to like people and people's differences. We argued and things like that, but we became better friends and now we can call on each other at any time. Because the group was so dynamic in terms of the different backgrounds, where people come from, and different ethnicities, you could see everybody grow...you just learn from them. That's what I really enjoyed. Now we're all friends. You try to keep in touch. It wasn't too big. It was a good number; I think that was what was really good about it. I really enjoyed being with those people. It was fun.

Summary of Findings

Schools where administrators were interviewed were very different in climate and culture. As a part of the large urban Dallas ISD, schools included inner-city elementary, middle, and high schools, from very old physical plants to new, from schools in warehouse districts to those surrounded by established neighborhoods. Most schools contained many at-risk students. Interviewees appeared optimistic about their schools and were determined to make a difference in the lives of their students. All administrators did evaluations of staff; several had experiences with nonrenewal or termination procedures with personnel. Part of the optimistic attitude evident among those interviewed was their attitudes toward their colleagues. Participants recited ways they work to improve staff morale.

Participants overwhelmingly thought the principal leadership program supported rigorous academic standards and instructional methods that motivated and engaged them. The faculty at their schools had helped them by the faculty's receptivity to new ideas transferred from the university classroom to their schools. These responders also indicated they learned about their own leadership styles and confidence in taking a leadership position because of participation in the leadership program. Their participation in the program changed their perceptions of educational leadership.

They indicated various administrative concerns when asked their biggest problems at their respective schools. Problems included time, discipline, safety, accountability, multi-tasking, communication, school climate and culture, change, and a need for more specific information regarding budgeting and Student Code of Conduct.

Respondents acknowledged wide use of technology to manage instruction and were continuing through what they learned in the preparation program and their daily practices to use insight into how goals of their schools could be achieved. Ongoing staff development opportunities and conferences play a part in their plans to achieve future goals for their schools.

All interviewees indicated use of data to plan for student success. Dallas ISD has a department that provides information to each school concerning each student. These data are used by administrators, teachers, and campus planning committees to generate lesson plans and campus improvement plans for each district campus. Conferences are held with individual students and their parents to go over test results.

Each person interviewed asserted there is an indirect effect on achievement of students in their school by building leaders. One middle-school administrator alleged it

was not an indirect effect, but a direct effect. Through team building, problem solving, hiring of personnel, and attitude, every person on the campus is affected by the administrators in charge. There are concerted efforts to build morale of students, teachers, and staff to work on individual and campus improvement. Teams meet together to discuss problems and potential solutions. During interviews, DISD administrators gave alternative and reasonable thoughts to a real-world situation reported by news reporters. Their solutions to the situation were compassionate and appropriate.

Concerns about strengths and weaknesses of the UNT/DISD/SREB program were explored in the last component of research. Participants saw as strengths of the program the field-based projects related to their schools. They were also cognizant of ample resource materials available to them. Members of the group received adequate help from relationships with teachers, administrators, and co-workers. Specific experiences beneficial to them were actual project requirements and conferences they attended. They spoke favorably about the notion of a cohort group moving through the program together. One person said, “Keep the cohort idea.”

Members of the group suggested aspects of the program that were not beneficial: the school finance course because they found that what they need is help with school budgets, daily log activities used in the multiculturalism class, and, taking part in the leadership development class in addition to teaching fulltime.

They offered suggestions for program improvements. One suggestion was to have a true internship rather than to be carrying a full teaching load, going through the leadership program and completing projects all at the same time. One middle school administrator said, “Our primary function in the school setting was still as a teacher. We

would have benefited greatly if we had an opportunity to just do an internship.” In addition, 3 interns urged UNT to cover school budgeting and the student code of conduct more thoroughly.

Another important change members of the class wanted was to put the practicum class in a semester by itself, preferably not in the spring. The thinking was this activity is demanding and time consuming and requires too much time to be completed when other classes are also challenging. This request was virtually unanimous from participants.

Several members of the group expressed the desire that everyone who completes the program receive an administrative position in DISD. Only one person spoke against this idea. The researcher did not bring up this notion; rather each person brought it to the researcher’s attention. People lamented the fact that DISD had lost some good people because they had left the district to seek jobs elsewhere. Program participants spoke of the good qualities, characteristics, and usefulness of those who were not placed in administrative positions in DISD. Some felt guilty they had administrative positions when others did not.

Regarding the idea of developing a new breed of principal, the majority of those questioned believed they were a part of new educational leadership ideals (Bottoms & O’Neill, 2001). They liked the idea of being the teachers’ teacher, of building leaders within their school community, of sharing the responsibility of student achievement with every person at their school campus.

Several themes emerged from the research completed in 2006. The first theme was the overall satisfaction of the leadership program in content and job preparation. Program participants appreciated rigorous standards and high expectations of the cohort

program. Secondly, ineffectiveness of the majority of mentor principals was apparent. The interaction with most mentor principals was a disappointing part of the principal-training program. The third theme was a need for specific training in school budgeting and familiarity with the student code of conduct. Realization that program completers could affect and achieve goals at their campuses because of participation in the program was a positive theme.

A fifth theme of research was awareness of the important role of the school administrator in indirectly affecting student achievement. Another theme that emerged was the unanimous support for a true administrative internship, free from teaching responsibilities. The seventh theme was the desire for all principal certificate completers to secure administrative positions in Dallas ISD. Indications were that DISD had lost several talented educators who left the district to secure jobs elsewhere.

The final theme that emerged was the certain knowledge that program participants were, in deed, part of the new breed of principal. They were determined to include all staff members in collaborative planning and practices to ensure success for their students. Implications of findings reported in this chapter will be discussed in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this research study was to examine a school-leadership preparation program at the University of North Texas after completion of the first cohort of students. The program was a partnership between the University and Dallas ISD entitled the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program. This principal preparation program was conceived because of the call from the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) for universities to restructure traditional school administrative training programs to create programs that placed “emphasis on the knowledge and skills needed by educational leaders to improve curriculum, instruction, and student achievement” (Bottoms & O’Neill, 2001, p. 2). The goal of the SREB was that leadership preparation programs train a new breed of school leader qualified to lead our schools. As a member of the SREB Leadership Development Network, the educational administration program at the University of North Texas formed a partnership with Dallas Independent School District. The partnership set up as 2-year principal-preparation program designed to train school leaders in the large, urban Dallas school district.

This study evaluated the program by examination of strengths and weaknesses to aid administrators of the University of North Texas program to determine whether changes should be made to future cohort-styled principal preparation programs with Dallas ISD or other districts. This study focused on the following objectives: (a) to find how participation in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program changed

involvement of administrative interns in campus-based decision making, (b) to identify how participation in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program changed the ways the administrative interns perceived themselves, (c) to determine what actions members of the cohort group had taken in their teacher-leader/administrative positions that affected student achievement, and (d) to determine strengths and weaknesses of the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program partnership from the viewpoint of the program participants.

Twenty-six teachers from 10 different schools in Dallas Independent School District were selected by their building principals and the University of North Texas faculty to participate in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program. The group began their studies in the fall of 2002. The cohort group was composed of 19 females and 7 males.

Research completed during the program by a University of North Texas doctoral student (Newman, 2004) is embodied in the review of literature. An unpublished questionnaire (Adkison, 2004) answered by members of the cohort group at the end of the program was evaluated to determine strengths and weaknesses of the program from each class member's vantage point.

Results of the Newman study (2004) and Adkison questionnaire (2004) are reviewed in chapter 2. Questionnaires were distributed in 2006 to completers of the program from this researcher to ascertain information that revealed perceptions of the program. Individual interviews were held with 8 members of the group who had obtained administrative positions in Dallas ISD. Interviews provided opportunities to explain responses to the questionnaire and to add meaning to their experiences. They provided

input as to how information learned in the program was used in their daily lives as administrators in Dallas ISD. Principal assessments completed by 7 of the 8 interviewees were reviewed to determine strengths and weaknesses of each administrator, as determined by his or her assessor.

An interview was conducted with 1 administrator in charge of staff development for principals in Dallas ISD. This interview provided background information regarding current placement of members of the cohort group in Dallas ISD. Documents pertaining to the creation and development of the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program were reviewed for historical information.

This evaluation employed the use of the CIPP theoretical framework developed by Stufflebeam (Gredler, 1996), as explained in chapter 1 and chapter 2. Findings of this evaluation model are encapsulated in the following section. Findings of data gathered from all questionnaires, interviews, and documents were presented in chapter 4. This chapter presents the findings from the research questions and is followed by an interpretation and discussion of the findings. At the conclusion of the chapter are recommendations for future research studies.

Research Findings

Context evaluation addresses goals, priorities, needs, and problems in planning, revising goals, and specifying objectives. The program was designed as a partnership between the University of North Texas and Dallas ISD to train future school leaders to be a new breed of principal as called for by the Southern Regional Education Board. Classes were held in DISD locations with a cohort group of 26 students. The embedded internship was a particular part of the design of the program along with specified course

sequence and requirements. Most future leaders were satisfied with sequence of courses and experiences that resulted in a coherent program. Use of simulations, case studies, and problem-solving approaches as instructional methods received high ratings. Instructional Leadership Development (ILD) training also received significant marks. The use of professional experiences such as field trips and participation in conferences to expand perspectives on education was enjoyed by group members. Field experiences were a planned part of the program. Most class members saw the direct relationship of field-based projects required to complete university coursework and real-world problems at school. An embedded internship that provided significant opportunities to synthesize and apply theory and practice was also planned, but for many members of the cohort group that did not materialize.

The role of mentor principal emerged as the key factor in the amount of involvement and the interns' levels of satisfaction with the internship experience. This important part of the concept of the program should be reassessed for alternative ways to achieve this major part of the training since this did not well serve many members of the program. This is a part of the input evaluation portion of CIPP. Other program alternatives to notice include communicating program intent with all acting Dallas ISD administrators and providing updates to campus principals on the location of graduates of the program when administrative positions occur on district campuses. Members of the cohort group reported that job placement assistance was not a great success.

Additional training regarding school budgeting and the student code of conduct was desired. Several members of the group reported the amount of time and work in

coursework completion as well as costs of the program should be thoroughly explained before the program begins.

The third part of the CIPP evaluation model is the process component, which includes documentation and assessment of program implementation. As previously discussed, a major part of dissatisfaction with the program was the role of the mentor principals in the internship. Training for the mentor principals might be a consideration for future cohort groups. There seemed to be a need for a longer embedded internship when leaders-in-training could be free of teaching duties. Most persons indicated the program required rigorous academic standards that motivated and engaged them. Different leadership principles were transferred from the university classroom to the workplace by the majority of the class members who indicated readiness for sustaining an instructional program at their campuses. Most indicated there was ample time for assignment completion. As far as adequate help available from relationships with people (teachers, administrators, co-workers, etc.), most agreed there was adequate help. Participants realized the importance of structuring and maintaining a campus culture for professional growth of their staff. Their coursework inspired them to be instrumental in enabling students to meet high standards. All respondents use student data to drive their campus improvement plans as well as teachers' lesson plans. All agreed that dissemination of test scores should be done with sensitivity to the privacy of students. Administrators also acknowledged an indirect effect on student achievement by building administrators.

The final part of the CIPP model is the product. What is the effect of the program? The product effect of the UNT/DISD/SREB program is a well-trained and

well-prepared public-school administrator. Of the 16 respondents to the questionnaire, all had completed the Master's of Education degree from the University of North Texas, and obtained the Texas principal certification. None of them hoped to continue teaching in the future. Most hoped to be campus administrators or hoped to work as members of the central office staff. Eight are currently serving as administrators; 8 are not.

This researcher found the majority of the interns reported that participation in the program had changed the way they perceived themselves in their maturity, their professional growth, and their belief in themselves. Several members of the cohort group indicated changes in maturity and personal strength. Half of the members of the group indicated they learned to cooperate better with others through the leadership program. Program participants learned about their personal leadership styles and most participants gained confidence in assuming leadership positions because of their participation in the program. Cohort members' knowledge of how to shape the campus culture was enhanced. Several members of the group had knowledge of how to communicate and collaborate with members of the school to promote student success. Class members believed they had been instrumental in enabling their faculty to have high expectations of all students. Program participants also indicated participation in the leadership readiness program helped them gain insight into how goals of their school could be achieved. Participants enjoyed participation in a cohort group of learners that progressed through the program together.

Interpretation and Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 explored how participation in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program changed involvement of administrative interns in campus-based decision making. Several themes emerged from the research: lack of support for the embedded internship within the 2-year program, importance of the role of the mentor principal in the internship program, effect of the participation of the intern within his or her school culture, and increased areas of responsibilities due to career changes into teacher-leader or administrative positions.

There was unanimous lack of support for the embedded internship that spanned the 2-year program. Each member of the group longed for a program change so the internship would be completed at a time when no other coursework was required.

Members of the group thought this course sequence would be more meaningful, without concurring teaching responsibilities and course work in the same semester.

Although the role of the mentor principal was not a part of this study, this theme was apparent in every interview and in every questionnaire returned to the researcher. The majority of the members of the preparation program had negative experiences with their campus, mentor principal. There were exceptions in instances where the relationships and collaboration had strengthened during the program so that good learning took place.

However, even individuals who related their own good fortune in learning from their mentor principals were aware of others who did not enjoy the same situation. However, it is not apparent from research studies that a person who goes through a self-selection

principal preparation program on his or her own has an effective mentor principal to learn from anymore than some of these administrative interns.

Program interns answered optimistically that they could implement collaborative curriculum planning within their school campus. Their response showed enthusiasm for use of research-based practices to develop and implement campus programs. The majority were prepared to facilitate effective campus curriculum planning. They acknowledged they could apply organizational skills to ensure an effective learning environment at their school campuses.

Though most respondents indicated university course work was beneficial to school improvement projects, most knew they personally had not been instrumental in working with other school personnel in applying research knowledge to improve practices of their schools. Whether this is an effect of not using research information or the inability to improve practices of schools is unclear.

Notably of the 16 respondents, 8 held administrative positions. Other respondents who were in nonadministrative positions expressed extreme dissatisfaction at not having been selected for an administrative position. Involvement in campus-decisions had increased as had duties. The 8 who served in administrative positions participated in observing and evaluating members of their faculties and boosting the morale of their staffs

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 investigated how participation in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program changed ways administrative interns perceive themselves. Most administrative interns perceived that they could act with integrity and

fairness in ethical, legal ways. All but one of the members of the cohort group indicated they had knowledge to promote use of creative thinking and problem solving by others on the campus to influence curriculum design and instruction. They were ready to implement staff evaluations to improve performance of staff members and apply legal requirements to manage personnel. Most members of the group were ready to manage the physical plant of a campus to ensure a safe learning environment.

By the fall of 2006, 2 years after the completion of the program, a majority of the original cohort members answered their confidence levels had risen because of their participation in the program. Program completers appeared to have changed their minds about hoping to be administrators 2 years after their principal preparation program was finished. A previous attitude showed 100% of the group wanted an administrative position after program completion. This attitude was altered by reality through life experiences. Those who were still teachers in the district recorded negative comments regarding not being selected as an administrator.

Results were encouraging as to cohort members' knowledge of their personal leadership styles. Most members of the group reported their confidence levels in assuming leadership roles had increased because of their work in the preparation program. Likewise, their understanding of the role of an administrator had changed through participation in the program.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 delved into actions members of the cohort group took in their teacher-leader or administrative positions to affect student achievement. Individual members of the group worked with other administrators, teachers, staff members, parents,

students, and increased their own staff development opportunities to affect student achievement at their campuses. Several themes were apparent: readiness skills developed during the principal preparation course, interactions with students after the principal preparation course, and interactions with adults after the principal preparation course. By engaging in the many activities of the leadership program they furthered their understanding of the many facets of school that affect students and the focus of student success.

When participants returned to their campuses to work as teachers or administrators after the completion of the leadership preparation course, they set to work to use the skills they learned. They relied on their unique experiences of sharing with other members of the cohort group as to what worked, how different campuses functioned, and to solve problems they experienced on their campuses. Participants helped students to understand curricular objectives to facilitate better test scores. One leadership participant worked with students to reach improved achievement by proper studying and organization. One female administrator worked with students on a personal level. Others worked in specific programs such as Saturday School, Reconnect Program, and Pal Power. School-wide tutoring plans and work with parents groups were also developed. A focus on the campus improvement plan allowed the campus team to use data and analysis of their students.

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 focused on strengths and weaknesses of the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program partnership from the viewpoint of the program participants. Concerns emerged from the study including: unsatisfactory

internship during the program, administrative positions attained or not attained by members of the group, indirect effect of administrators on student achievement, and certain knowledge of being a new breed of principal.

There were mixed reactions to the internship portion of the program. Program participants who had mentor principals that allowed them to be participatory in collaboration and sharing administrative duties on their campuses thought the internship was worthwhile. Those who were not fortunate to have a mentor principal who involved them believed they missed a vital part of their preparation program. Members who were fortunate to have a good experience understood the situation of their fellow cohort members and realized problems with that portion of the program. Some of the mentor principals realized they needed direction about the duties they should assign to their campus intern (Newman, 2004). The role of the mentor principal was vital in shaping the success each intern felt about the program. It is important to look at restructuring this part of the leadership-preparation program.

Administrative interns who secured administrative positions in Dallas ISD seemed excited about their jobs. They were determined to make a difference in the lives of their students. Participants lamented the loss of other persons in their cohort group who did not obtain an administrative position or left the district to seek employment elsewhere. Ethnicity was never brought up as an issue for either hiring or not hiring certain individuals. What some individuals did lament was the fact that some of the abilities and talents of some of the members of their group were underutilized. Some indicated they were promised jobs when they began the program. Research showed this to be untrue (Newman, 2004). Nevertheless, there are teachers in DISD who went

through this program who are discouraged because they were passed over for certain jobs.

The reputation and validity of this program rests on the graduates, and for others to want to be a part of the program it behooves UNT and Dallas ISD to pay close attention to hiring members of this program. When other people in the district are aware of the money, time, and effort of all parties involved—UNT and DISD— and see little results in the form of additional administrators, the program loses credibility.

Course sequencing was a concern of each member of the cohort interviewed. All wished for a semester or a year of true internship, free of teaching assignments. Several also did not like the practicum, or action research, portion of the coursework taken concurrently with 2 other classes the semester before graduation. Quality of the practicum was compromised under these conditions. Strengths of the program were identified in these categories: cohort group camaraderie, collaboration, and satisfaction with classes and instructors.

Despite negative aspects of the program participants were still glad they had participated in the program and thought it was a “good deal” for them. They are encouraged that future programs are underway. They pay attention to changes and see those changes as positive steps that will influence future cohort groups.

Eight interns who were interviewed were excited about the possibility of becoming the new breed of school leader, if that meant focusing on academics and how children learn. They appreciated the call from SREB for school leaders to be strong instructional leaders. They also noted the “push” for collaboration in “principaling.” They

liked the fact that everybody in the building is involved in promoting success (Newman, 2004).

By empowering teachers to have ownership in decisions for the school, they were building pride in the product of their school—successful students. They considered themselves the new breed of principal that SREB wanted when they put out the call to revamp the administrative preparation programs in their university network. Participants were asked whether they considered themselves a new breed of principal as had been called for by the SREB. Answers were affirmative. They enjoy teaching their teachers, empowering their staff to solve problems, and giving control for the success of their school to everyone on their staffs.

Relation of Current Findings to Findings of Newman

Newman's findings (2004), at the halfway point of the program, revealed few changes in involvement of participants in campus-based decisions. Only 4 interns were more involved than in previous years. Participants were assigned more duties during their internship but reports indicated no decisions were required in these new duties. The findings of this researcher show renewed involvement in campus decisions of the 8 participants who secured administrative positions. They participate in campus-level team meetings and are required to make many job related decisions each day. They give input to school budget, hiring teachers and staff, leading discussions, and working to provide safety and security for students and staff.

Newman's study (2004) showed a lack of support for the embedded internship. This was due in large part because some mentor principals were reported not to have provided opportunities for interns. Program participants were frustrated to miss this

important part of the program. Current research shows this program component to be problematic. All individuals who answered the latest questionnaire reflected that many program participants did not have a good internship experience due to significant disappointment by actions of mentor principals. The role of mentor principal is a key component of a successful internship experience.

Current findings were compared to Newman's (2004) findings regarding ways administrative interns perceive themselves. Newman's research showed participants' greatest growth areas to be in personal maturity, professional growth, and belief in themselves. All participants desired to assume a school leadership position. This researcher concurs with these findings to a point. At present, not all program participants desire a school administrative position. The gap has widened in both time (3 years) and enthusiasm for securing a school leadership job. Some participants were passed over for a position, which resulted in dissatisfaction and negativism, as noted by comments in chapter 4. Some participants left Dallas ISD to secure leadership positions in other school districts. Some remain as teachers in Dallas ISD while 13 of the original members presently work as administrators.

Those who work as school leaders report they are globally minded, realize they are responsible for all students, and enjoy continued professional growth through conferences, training meetings, and professional development opportunities. These findings concur with those of Newman (2004).

Newman (2004) and this researcher concur that the UNT/DISD/SREB program develops a new breed of principal. Findings from the previous research and present findings are in line. Participants realized then and continue to realize that a school leader

makes a difference, needs to have skills to work collaboratively with a school team, and possess ability to motivate teachers and students. They value organization, preparation, and planning. Both studies concur that a leader should be visible, lead by example, and focus on academics. In the Newman's study one person indicated they needed to continue to develop and not become part of the status quo of school administration.

Implications of Research Findings for Principal Preparation Programs

There were many positive aspects of this program according to members of the cohort. Members indicated due to their participation in the program, they were able to affect curriculum in positive ways, use research-based practices, and involve collaborative planning in the learning organizations of their school campuses. They were confident they had gained knowledge through organizational skills to manage resources to benefit campus improvement.

Members indicated they were effective schools leaders by participating in open forums, giving suggestions, securing safety and security procedures, and evaluating teachers. They were involved in boosting the moral of staff members and empowering teachers in decision-making processes.

They gained acceptance and cooperation of other faculty members and indicated ongoing maturity and professional growth for themselves. Their belief in themselves was strengthened through their participation in the program. Cohort members were more globally minded and realized the principal of a school makes a difference in reaching the goal of student achievement. They acknowledged ethical and legal readiness to use problem-solving skills to manage personnel and the physical plant of a school campus. Their perceptions of educational leadership had changed as they gained more knowledge

of what it takes to be an effective school leader. Administrators acknowledged an indirect effect on student achievement by building administrators.

Cohort members were able to shape a campus culture shared by all who worked and learned on the campus. They were ready to lead a team of learners. By using data and technology, they were prepared to offer services to students. All respondents use student data to drive their campus improvement plans and teachers' lesson plans. Participants were determined to have high expectations of students through their insights into how goals of their school could be achieved.

Individuals who secured administrative positions considered themselves to have reached the SREB goal of becoming a new breed of principal. They were teachers of teachers and empowering agents to fellow staff members. They shared obligations and rewards of success with everyone on the staff.

Negative characteristics of the leadership program were the embedded internship, which for most was a frustrating experience due to lack of collaboration and direction from the mentor principal. Cohort members also did not like the placement of the practicum course; they desired it to be scheduled in a semester by itself. All program participants were dissatisfied that many members of the group were not hired in administrative positions after completion of the program.

Based on information gathered from participants of the cohort group, further recommendations are in order. Requested improvements to the program include a study of school budgets rather than a focus on the state school finance system. Also requested was a thorough study of the student code of conduct as mandated by Texas statute. Interns suggested a better understanding of data analysis and what to do with the results

in order to help student achievement. Full and accurate disclosure of course requirements, time lines, and financial aspects of the program should be done at the beginning of the program.

One puzzling result centered around the impact on students. A question was asked of each new administrator during the interview process concerning his or her personal impact on students as an administrator or as a classroom teacher. The researcher was surprised that 3 individuals indicated more impact on students as a teacher while 3 indicated more impact on students as an administrator. The expectation of the researcher was for all to choose their administrative position as having the most impact. The researcher expected that they would want to work in the area where they had the most impact on students and satisfaction from their career. Administrators who leaned toward teaching seemed to miss the personal knowledge they had of each student in their classroom or coaching duties.

Suggestions for Dallas ISD

Efforts for this group to meet twice during each school year should be attempted. Some of the members stay in touch and express the opinions that they have a broader picture of the happenings in the school district because they are in different areas of the district, performing somewhat different jobs. There is potential for problem solving within this group that could be valuable to Dallas ISD.

Another important implication of the research is the need for the graduates of the leadership-development program to be hired in Dallas ISD. This would give the program the credibility it deserves. Program planners from the University of North Texas and Dallas ISD could hold meetings with Dallas campus principals to explain the program as

it is crafted specifically for Dallas ISD. A list of the graduates of the program and their present locations in Dallas ISD could periodically be sent to all principals to keep them abreast of these qualified candidates.

Recommendations for Further Study

Several recommendations for further research studies follow. An interesting study concerning cohorts would entail comparing cohorts in school-leadership preparation courses to the success of traditional students who self select courses and move through their coursework independently. There is limited research to affirm or disprove specific advantages and disadvantages of cohorts in various educational settings. Limited studies focus on advantages of cohorts, but fail to recognize the faults of the learning model.

It would benefit principal preparation programs to track self-selected program participants when compared with cohort groups of selected program participants to determine whether the individuals in the two programs become successful school leaders after they enter the administrative field. Further research is needed to make a determination on the best career pathway.

A longitudinal study might track the original 26 members of the cohort group in this study for at least 3 additional years. This is recommended to provide information for UNT/DISD principal program proponents. The study could determine whether this different method of training school leaders is superior to methods used in traditional programs. Evidence that new methods are effective can be accomplished by comparing results of this program, and similar redesigned programs, to traditional preparation programs. The determination of the success of these program participants will be helpful to facilitate the longitudinal study.

A study to compare effectiveness of the UNT/DISD/SREB program graduates as school leaders to effectiveness of school leaders trained in traditional preparation programs is also in order. This would require a special research design to account for many variables that have an effect on student achievement. With this type of comparison research, there could be additional information about restructured principal preparation programs as they train future school leaders as compared to traditional preparation programs.

Though not a part of this research, the problem of the mentor principals was significant to every participant. If the program design continues with selection of participants coming from recommendations from campus principals, it would be helpful to determine whether mentor principals need additional training on their roles in the program before they are assigned duties by the school district.

There are few articles in peer-reviewed journals concerning indirect effect models of school leadership on student achievement. Hallinger and Heck (1998) found a small but significant direct effect on improved learning climate and a moderate indirect effect of principals' instructional efforts on student outcomes. In a study of reading achievement in elementary schools Hallinger, Bickman, and Davis (1996) found a direct effect of leadership on a clear school mission, which influenced student opportunities to learn and teachers' expectations for student achievement. These studies suggest new routes for future research that include the indirect model.

Research of the last decades has raised questions about the relation between educational leadership and student achievement, rather than clarifying the issues. Research does not give conclusive answers to the questions: How do school principals

influence the essential processes in their schools; and how can school leaders effectively affect student achievement?

Finally, comparisons of student achievement levels at different schools could be a tool to investigate the effectiveness of administrators trained in this program when compared with administrators trained in other alternative preparation courses and administrators who self select training. However, there are many factors to consider when comparing student achievement levels at different schools within a large school district. Neighborhoods, climate and culture of schools, poverty levels, teacher retention, and parent involvement are factors that play into student achievement scores.

Conclusion

It was a privilege to do research on the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Preparation Program. This researcher became more familiar with Dallas ISD personnel, campuses, and the city of Dallas during this period. The attributes of successful school leaders and school leadership preparation programs are worthy of study and emulation.

The study provided revelations into other alternative types of certification programs, which were interesting to discover. The particular educational administration program evaluated by this researcher was the University of North Texas partnership with Dallas Independent School District. This partnership provided a 2-year, field-based, principal-preparation program designed to prepare effective school leaders for Dallas public schools. The program was designed because of the Southern Regional Education Board's call for a new breed of principal to be trained in universities-principals who positively effect student achievement. This evaluation study of the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program found the program made significant progress in meeting the goals

of the program. The UNT/DISD/SREB program appears to be on track for developing the new breed of principal as called for by SREB. The study also revealed some problem areas in the program such as specific course content, internship, and job placement.

Administrative interns were involved in campus-based decision-making processes. The level of involvement of most of the cohort group grew due to increased duties or job assignments. Duties and opportunities on campuses in relation to campus decision making had grown by the time of this study. Other opportunities for important campus decisions included open forums, giving suggestions, and responsibility for safety and security of the campus. Interviews with administrators revealed they evaluated teachers on their campuses and did walk-through observations of different teachers on a daily basis. Administrators did specific things to boost morale for their teachers, staff, and students at their school. Most administrators served on the campus decision-making committee and worked to empower teachers in decision-making situations to make their schools better. By empowering teachers to have ownership in decisions for the school, they were building pride in the product of their school, their successful students. They considered themselves the new breed of principal SREB wanted when they put out the call for revamping administrative preparation programs in their university network.

The second research question determined perceptions cohort members had of themselves. Most persons indicated the program required rigorous academic standards that motivated and engaged them. Leadership principles were transferred from the university classroom to the workplace by the majority of class members. The role of the mentor principal, although not a part of this study, was the key factor in satisfaction or

dissatisfaction of the embedded intern program because the relationship with the mentor principal determined the level of satisfaction of the internship experience.

Program participants learned about their personal leadership styles. Most participants gained confidence in assuming leadership positions because of their participation in the program. Perceptions of educational leadership were changed for each member in the preparation program. Participants were asked whether they considered themselves a new breed of principal as had been called for by the SREB. Answers were affirmative. They enjoy teaching their teachers, empowering their staff to solve problems, and giving control for the success of their school to everyone on their staffs.

Concerning actions members of the group had taken in their teacher-leader and administrative positions to affect student achievement, most respondents indicated they were instrumental in enabling students to meet high standards. Participants believed they were instrumental in encouraging their faculty to have high expectations of all students. Program participants indicated their participation in the leadership readiness program helped them gain insight into how goals of their school could be achieved. Most hoped to be administrators or hoped to work as members of the central office staff. Administrators acknowledged an indirect effect on student achievement by building administrators.

From the viewpoint of the program participants, there were both strengths and weaknesses in the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program. Class members saw the direct relationship of field-based projects required to complete university coursework and real-world problems at school. Most indicated there was always ample time for assignment completion and agreed there was adequate help available from

relationships with people (teachers, administrators, co-workers, fellow cohort members, etc.).

A limitation of this study is that not all program participants responded to the questionnaire and/or to interviews (for those who had secured administrative positions). The study would have been strengthened with insight from all participants.

There appears to be a lack of empirical research to support claims that a restructured principal-preparation program is superior to methods of traditional-preparation programs. More research should be conducted by impartial, nonbiased researchers to include comparison studies between graduates of restructured programs and those in traditional programs to look for differences and relationships between school improvement and student achievement.

APPENDIX A
RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

**University of North Texas Institutional Review Board
Research Consent Form**

Subject Name _____ Date _____

Title of Study: Third Year Evaluation of the University of North Texas/Dallas Independent School District/Southern Regional Education Board (UNT/DISD/SREB) Leadership Development Program

Principal Investigator: Mary Ann Jordan

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose and benefits of the study and how it will be conducted.

Purpose of the Study: This study is being conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the UNT/DISD/SREB Leadership Development Program and to determine if the program is meeting the established goals set out for the program.

Description of the Study: Qualitative research methods will be used in this study. Approximate duration of each subject's participation will be 30 minutes.

Procedures to be used: Participants will be asked to complete a questionnaire. Focused interview sessions of about 45 minutes will be held with the participants that have secured an administrative position. Historical documents relating to the program will be reviewed.

Description of the foreseeable risks: None of the procedures should cause any discomfort for any participant. Every effort will be made to conduct the interviews so as to not inconvenience the participants.

Benefits to the subjects or others: Participants in this study could benefit from program improvements, if the study reveals a need for changes to some areas of the program. UNT and Dallas ISD officials will benefit from the results of the study in planning and implementing the program, as well as making changes for future programs.

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records: Participants' names will not be used in any published reports relating to this study. All notes and tape recordings will be destroyed at the end of the study.

**University of North Texas
Research Consent Form (Continued)**

Review for the Protection of Participants:

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-3940 or sbourns@unt.edu with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

Research Subject's Rights

I have read or have had read to me all of the above.

Mary Ann Jordan has explained the study to me, through this communication and/or by telephone and answered all of my questions. I have been told the risks and/or discomforts as well as the possible benefits of the study.

I understand that I do not have to take part in this study and my refusal to participate or my decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop my participation at any time.

In case I have any questions about the study, I have been told I can contact Dr. Janie Huffman, Educational Administration Program, xxx-xxx-xxxx or Mary Ann Jordan, doctoral candidate, xxx-xxx-xxxx.

I understand my rights as a research subject and I voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I understand what the study is about, how the study is conducted, and why it is being performed. I have been told I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

Signature of Subject

Date

For the Investigator or Designee:

I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the subject signing above. I have explained the known benefits and risks of the research. It is my opinion that the subject understood the explanation.

Signature of Principal Investigator or Designee

Date

Subject's printed name
Workplace/facility:

Position:

Work address:

Work telephone number:

APPENDIX B

ADMINISTRATIVE INTERN QUESTIONNAIRE

Administrative Intern Questionnaire

Third Year Evaluation of the University of North Texas/Dallas Independent School District/Southern Regional Education Board Leadership Development Program

You have been asked to complete this questionnaire because you were a participant in the UNT/Dallas Independent School District Leadership Development Program. Your responses to the following questions will remain anonymous.

Instructions – Please answer each question according to specific instructions given for the particular section.

Section I – Curriculum and Assignments

Circle one numbered answer for each question (1 representing “none,” 2 representing “some of the time,” 3 representing “most of the time,” and 4 representing “all of the time”) and/or furnish the answer in your own words.

1. I think the program supported rigorous academic standards and instructional methods that motivate and engage me.

1	2	3	4
none	some of the time	most of the time	all of the time

2. The field-based projects I was required to complete for my university course work directly related to real-world problems at school.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

If the answer is a 3 or 4, briefly describe the problems:

3. The specific aspects/experiences of the preparation program that were beneficial to leadership knowledge and skill acquisition were:
4. The specific aspects/experiences of the preparation program that were not beneficial to leadership knowledge and skill acquisition were:

5. My university course work has proven beneficial to school improvement project(s).

1 2 3 4

If the answer is a 3 or 4, briefly describe the school improvement project(s).

6. There were ample resource materials provided to me during the leadership development program.

1 2 3 4

7. There were ample financial resources provided to me during the leadership development program.

1 2 3 4

8. There was ample time provided for coursework assignments/completion during the leadership development program.

1 2 3 4

9. There was adequate help available to me from relationships with people (teachers, administrators, co-workers, etc.) during the program.

1 2 3 4

10. These improvements to the program should be made:

11. The knowledge/skill that I gained during the program that is most helpful to me in my daily educational practice is:

Section II – Gains from the Program

Circle one numbered answer for each question (1 representing “none,” 2 representing “some of the time,” 3 representing “most of the time,” and 4 representing “all of the time”) and/or furnish the answer in your own words.

12. I think there is great pressure to secure an administrative position as a result of my participation in the program.

1 2 3 4

13. I apply research knowledge to improve school practices.

1 2 3 4

14. I use technology to manage instruction.

1 2 3 4

15. I receive cooperation from teachers and staff in my school when I initiate a field-based project or incorporate something new learned in one of my classes.

1 2 3 4

16. I receive cooperation from administrators in my school when I initiate a field-based project or incorporate something new learned in one of my classes.

1 2 3 4

17. The faculty at school is receptive to new ideas transferred from my university classroom to our workplace.

1 2 3 4

18. The faculty at school is receptive to different leadership principles transferred from my university classroom to our workplace.

1 2 3 4

19. The principal at school is receptive to new ideas transferred from my university classroom to our workplace.

1 2 3 4

20. The principal at school is receptive to different leadership principles transferred from my university classroom to our workplace.

1 2 3 4

21. After participation in the program, I have learned more about my personal leadership style.

1 2 3 4

22. I have been instrumental in enabling students to meet high standards.

1 2 3 4

If the answer is a 3 or 4, briefly describe the way(s) you were instrumental in enabling students to meet high standards:

23. I have been instrumental in enabling faculty and teachers to have high expectations of all students.

1 2 3 4

If the answer is a 3 or 4, briefly describe the way(s) you enabled faculty and teachers to have high expectations of all students.

24. My confidence in assuming leadership positions has increased as a result of participation in the program.

1 2 3 4

25. Participation in the program helped me gain insight into how the goals of my school can be achieved.

1 2 3 4

26. Participation in the program changed the way I perceive the world of educational leadership.

1 2 3 4

27. My administrative role allowed me to make contributions to student achievement at my campus.

1 2 3 4

If the answer is a 3 or 4, briefly describe your role in the contributions to student achievement.

28. My administrative role allowed me to make contributions to a personal, caring school environment that helps students meet higher standards

1 2 3 4

If the answer is a 3 or 4, briefly describe your role in the contributions to a personal, caring school environment that helps students meet higher standards

29. I have been instrumental in working with school personnel in applying research knowledge to improve school practices.

1

2

3

4

If the answer is a 3 or 4, briefly describe your role in working with school personnel in applying research knowledge to improve school practices.

Circle either “yes” or “no” to answer the question.

30. I secured a position as an administrator since completing the program.

Yes

No

Section III – Background and Activities

Please answer the following questions by placing a check in front of the appropriate answer or by filling in the blank.

31. What is your sex? _____ Male _____ Female

32. What is your age range? _____ Less than 30 years old _____ 31 – 40 years old
_____ 41 – 50 years old _____ Over 50 years old

33. What is your ethnicity?
_____ American Indian, Inuit, or Aleut
_____ Black or African American
_____ Mexican American
_____ Asian/Pacific Islander
_____ Other Hispanic or Latin American
_____ White
_____ Other

34. From which type of program did you receive your teacher certification?

_____ Traditional university program
_____ Emergency or alternative certification program

35. Including this year, how many years of teaching experience do you have in public and nonpublic schools? _____

36.What is your current academic job responsibility? _____

37.What extra-curricular activities do you moderate? _____

38.Did you complete the Master's of Education Degree from the University of North Texas?

_____ Yes

_____ No

39.Did you complete the Texas Principal Certification?

_____ Yes

_____ No

40.What do you hope to pursue as your primary job?

_____Teaching

_____Administrator

_____Central Office Staff

41.Where do you hope to be employed in the future?

_____Dallas

_____Any school district other than Dallas ISD

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

Third Year Evaluation of the University of North Texas/ Dallas Independent School District/Southern Regional Education Board Leadership Development Program

1. Research asserts there is an indirect effect on student achievement by the building leaders. What is the climate and culture of your school?
2. Have you received Professional Development Appraisal System administrative training? Have you participated in training teachers on the appraisal system?
3. Do you participate in teacher evaluations? If so, how is the faculty divided among the administrators who complete the evaluations?
4. Have you been involved in nonrenewals and/or terminations of teachers?
5. Are you familiar with the recent situation at Everman where the principal is criticized for her announcement concerning student achievement scores? What would have been a better way to handle that information?
6. What is the biggest problem you face as an administrator at your school?
7. Have you and the other administrators done things specifically to improve the morale of your teachers and staff? If so, what?
8. Are you involved in the Campus Decision Making Committee? What is the role of the site based team at your school?
9. Do you use data to plan for student success? If so, how do you use the data you gather for your students?
10. In your career as an educator, have you made the most impact on students as an administrator or as a teacher? How did you impact your students?
11. What in the UNT/DISD/SREB leadership development program needs to be eliminated?
12. What is missing in the school leader training program? Would more training on the use of data be beneficial to the program?
13. Should more time be spent during the administrative preparation program as an intern and less time spent doing coursework?

14. In the program developed by the University of North Texas and Dallas ISD, the focus was on the suggestion by the Southern Regional Education Board to develop a “new breed” of principal. Do you see yourself as a “new breed” of principal?
15. As a part of my study, it is suggested I review documents related to the study of this cohort of principal preparation students. Have you completed a principal assessment? Would you be willing to share the document with me?

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